This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07604314 4

TOY

By

GERTRUDE SANBORN

Fiction (American)

LC
2+F

S. G.
NE

TOY

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
71492A
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1922 L

COPYRIGHT, 1922
BY
GERTRUDE SANBORN

To the
understanding
spirit of friendship, and
to one of her gracious disciples,

Paul Beldon

with whom I have spent unforgetably
happy hours that now find quiet
perpetuation in this affec-
tionate tribute

2 X 2 77

TOY

CHAPTER I

IT IS a hazardous undertaking these days to come into the world.

What with our advanced ideas cantering past nature's finishing post, dragging with them twilight sleep, daybreak dancing and newly discovered serums; what with low shoes and bare chests in winter, and all night jamborees, cigarettes and stimulants in summer, it takes nerve and a surmounting of multiple difficulties to arrive on life's platform.

Perhaps the little girls arrive dragged hither by their besetting sin, curiosity. They just must see what it is all about down there in the whirling, smoky, clattering old world that bobs like a cinder in the night's twinkling eye. And, of course, the little boys follow where the little girls lead, but as soon as the boys acquire a garment to thrust their fists into they promptly forget their home in the skies and

join in right merrily with the marvelous clatter, while the little girls—many of them—never quite forget.

There are the lakes and the oceans to remind them of far away pools; there are flower faces that blow faint breaths of remembrance over their hearts; there are purple peaks and gay valleys; fruit laden trees and birds winging off as they sing, and ever so many bits of dear, peaceful homeland on this alien shore.

"Everything is going very well, sir," volunteered the extra priced nurse, clicking back her thermometer.

She wondered if Alfred, her lover, would ever draw salary enough to buy her the counterpart of the mahogany encased triple-chimed clock that was striking behind her.

Seven—eight.

"I'll go down into the library and smoke a bit," whispered the specialist.

"Perfect nuisance, this waiting," muttered the nurse when his back was well through the door. She stumbled across a thick rug. She was accustomed to stone floors at the hospital. Why would people insist on bearing children in their own homes! So much foreign mat-

ter about; danger of infection; everything so unhandy; but then, she shrugged, one couldn't dictate to money!

Finding a seat near a front window, the nurse watched the rain splash on the pavement.

Those biggest lights were probably at the edge of the park. She was not familiar with this part of the city. Should this prove to be a sick, howling baby she would have Alfred send a telegram calling her home to look after an indisposed father, who, to tell the truth, had died several years before, but still served his daughter as an excuse when evading her duty. The nurse yawned and nodded. A taxi went by. A taxi went by. A taxi went by. The nurse fell asleep.

Brule Ashworth left the chair beside his wife's bed. He tilted a pink lamp shade on the chiffonier so the light struck a bit lower.

"My word!" he lamented, drawing aside the curtain and looking into the street, "how it does rain!"

He returned to the chiffonier and tilted the pink shade back to the very angle he had twitched it out of a moment before. He

plumped into a chair and regarded his reclining lady, who looked up and fretted.

"I wish you wouldn't prowl and roam so, Brule. I'm nervous as a cat. This whole thing is a nuisance! I didn't want any children. I'm missing the dinner dances at the club. I've had to give up those wonderful evenings with Henley on great paintings. I know my figure will be utterly ruined—and there are those three stunning gowns from Caroline! I've scarcely seen the new motor, and all these lovely autumn days are slipping away. Why didn't you marry a Hun or a milliner? Why didn't you? Don't speak to me!"

"There—there, try not to work yourself into a tantrum," soothed Ashworth. "Suppose I send for your mother."

"No, do nothing of the sort!" snapped Mrs. Ashworth, throwing a green covered magazine onto a gold and white table, where it succeeded in upsetting a carafe and then dropped to the floor.

"Mother's at the club. Let her enjoy herself—if I can't! She's a dandy good fellow, but don't pin a grandmother sign on her just

yet. They are putting on a new dance to-night."

Ashworth wiggled his feet and hummed.

"Saw Rene Woodson to-day," he ventured. "Awfully diverting girl. Said to me, 'Last time you saw me, old boy, I was a Roman beauty. Behold my new Grecian nose! The beauty professor argued for a new brow; wanted to raise mine—said most women were glad to pay his prices in order to look intelligent.'"

"Has Rene any wrinkles?" demanded Mrs. Ashworth, shaking her husband's arm peremptorily. "Ugh! I hate to get old—and this is the best way to do it. Nobody that is anybody has a family these days. It's positively bourgeoise. Middle age next, and then—what is it the Bible says about reaching the limit at threescore and ten?"

"No vapor heat and vacuum cleaners in Bible times, you know," soothed Ashworth. "People worked harder, died sooner. Cut loose from B. C.—you are in the twentieth century now. You can't find old age to-day with a microscope and a road map. Nobody's wearing it. The latest occupations of our grandparents are all night dances and dashes

through the ether at one hundred miles an hour. Buck up, girlie, there's lots coming!"

And in this wise they waited for the little stranger—a hostile, brutally indifferent tribe.

Down, down through the whirling cosmos came the spark of a soul with a smile on its lips. Past God's moon; past His stars; into white clouds and dim mists; through the dew on pale roses. Oh, the determination of it! Law had fashioned for it a place on earth; law had set it free in heaven and law, brooking no hindrances, goes on forever.

Without friends or luggage, without passport or knowledge, the little stranger reached life's platform.

It was met by the waiting committee, blanketed and ticketed and shunted into a crib. A pink, billowy crib that had cost a great deal of money, but the wee soul was startled by the cramped bit of flesh into which it was thrust like a free bird caught in a cage. There was one awful shuddering moment when, stunned by its loss of the great open spaces, and its concourse of playmates, it lay dazed.

Then for sheer loneliness it cried out—oh, how it cried!

The specialist bent over the newly made mother.

"All right now! You're fit as a fiddle. Have a peep at little Miss Ashworth?"

"Take it away! It cries off key! I'll have hysterics! Everything has been done for it. Somebody has been hired to nurse it. I've done my share. Take it away!"

A gray look crossed the specialist's face. He sighed. The last bit of sentiment had gone out of the lives of these terrible moderns. In his mind's eye he saw long lines of sad faced babies stepping out of their cribs, seeking the nearest hospital, undergoing vaccination, having adenoids removed, and returning surgically perfect to their push buttons and radiators.

"Call me at the club, if you need me, nurse."

"Very well, doctor. Good night."

The clock chimed again.

The doctor went out into the night and forgot it was raining till a reminding stream trickled coldly down the inside of his collar. An emotion teased and annoyed him. Behind his smug professional mask beat a warm heart that stood astounded at the petulant shifting of

a sacred responsibility by the wife of Brule Ashworth.

"Confound such a woman," he muttered, "confound her!"

He went stumbling on, looking forward into the night as into a black cavern from whose yawning jaws stretched baby hands groping for soft, yielding breasts, but finding none; coaxing baby faces floated before him in the murmuring air to whose mute questionings he tried vainly to offer explanation; his eyes were dim with weariness; the pad, pad, pad of his homeward bound step cut into the drip, drop, drip of the stubbornly descending rain that splashed about his unprotected shoulders like tears from little eyes heavy lidded.

Almost the first thing Brule Ashworth's wife said to him when she managed to talk. was:

"You must make more money than ever now, Brule. You can't expect me to give up even the tiniest thing. If I'm to live my life we'll have to have day and night nurses for the little nuisance, and later on maids and governesses and tutors. Heavens! What an ex-

pense she will be! But I shall not give up a thing! Not the tiniest thing!"

However, Brule Ashworth's wife did give up something. She gave up her life. There was a mark on Fate's big engagement calendar. She was slated to entertain Death, and when, in a week, the day fell—she met the engagement.

CHAPTER II

LITTLE Miss Antoinette Ashworth, like every other child, was a wonderful, chameleon-like being, whose hazy young hours were spent in absorbing the delicate shades and meanings of life and in exhibiting them again in soft little ways of her own.

As she unfolded in her father's lonely house she offered enigma after enigma for someone's solving—but there was no one who cared. Skipping, as softly and delicately as a sprite, through the dim halls and over the somber rugs, she offered delightful pose after pose—but there was no one who saw.

Many a time as she stood at twilight in the solemn fire lit drawing room, her wistful face turned to the long windows, rare emotions darkened her eyes, but there was no one to comprehend. When she was stirred to gladness and uttered rapturous cries over black trees that caught flocks of swiftly winging birds there was no one to hear.

At the age of twelve the servants found her

quick witted, odd and shyly aloof. They clothed her and fed her and left her alone. To them she was unimportant. She was just a child. Just a something to be kept in its place, stuffed with cereals and placidly ignored. Her body was bathed and attired while her soul went quite naked.

Brule Ashworth paid his unwelcome child's bills, tipped the servants to remember her, and promptly forgot her himself in his gay journeyings to clubs, theatres and countless affairs of one sort or another.

Cuddled in her chastely unornamented bed at night Antoinette, early called Toy, frequently wondered if God was aware of her, and if He was why He was not kind enough to hang some sort of sign, or message, on her bed post. It would have been so comforting and chummy. Like belonging to somebody as some of her school mates belonged to kind eyed mothers.

But, to be frank about it, if she had had her choice between God and a human she would undoubtedly have bidden for the arms of the Swedish house maid whose cheeks were pink, and whose smile was merry.

Whenever Toy made affectionate advances, lured on by the sparkling blue eyes of the girl, she was met by a peremptory order:

"Go away, Toy! — I'm in a fierce hurry. I got other fish to fry!"

Flouncing forth, perfumed and beribboned, she would leave the lonely little girl to ponder on what manner of fish one might fry nightly on the sidewalks of a city.

The impressions that showered about her all day long caught Toy sharply like bits of highly colored flying glass. In due time she was pressed into various church affairs whose turbulence astonished her dainty soul. A thin visaged Sunday school teacher called at her father's door and escorted her to festivals and picnics. Her timid spirit recoiled from these boisterous gatherings, leaving her shy little form the butt and jest of her more robust companions.

The perplexed, steamy, utterly desolate hours spent among the shrill voiced guild ladies in the church hall where she was frequently pressed into service and forced to make feverish dashes with platters of ham for persons waiting hungrily at long tables, served to

stamp the words "religion" and "ham" in parallel lines on her divining brain.

In sharp contrast to the aversion she felt for the guild hall activities was her feeling toward the church. She liked the great quiet edifice. She liked to steal into it when it was empty and sit under one of the high windows in the warm radiance from the orange and lemon tinted squares in its border. It was like sipping a spiritual nectar.

On one particular occasion, when the confusion and heat in the guild hall kitchen were at their height, and the savor of the ham and salads stifled her, Toy stole away into the church. She was filled with pent up elation as she sat in a forward pew near the altar. Her wide eyes rested on the Christ face exquisitely wrought in mosaics.

A light wind fluttered at the high Gothic windows. Out of the feverish whirl she had sought sanctuary. She was alone with her Maker. An odd thought for a child whose services had been solicited to assist in handling a record-breaking sociable supper.

A door opened and Mr. Creston, the pastor, came into the church. Toy, deeply absorbed

in her own thoughts, failed to hear him as he approached her.

"Tired, child?"

"No," Toy replied softly but vigorously. "No, but I'm never going to serve in there again!"

"Why? Has some one spoken abruptly to you, little one? They are all in a dreadful hurry and flurry, you know."

"I don't believe God likes ham in His church. When I go to the butcher shop I expect to see ham and bacon and all sorts of awful little sausages and smoked things, but when I come here to see the beautiful Christ I want only to see Him. Ugh! I can smell the coffee and the onions in the salad everywhere!"

Mr. Creston laid his firm, cool hand on Toy's hot little fingers:

"You have touched the very core of it all, child—and found the decay. It is the thing that has made my ministry a nightmare—however, one is but a leaf on the tide!"

"I shall not be a leaf!" Toy rebelled in a suppressed whisper.

Mr. Creston smiled. He felt very much at

peace just then. He felt more a Christian than he had felt for months. Momentarily his soul had brushed a kindred soul. Adding his unworded disapproval to Toy's hotly flung words of disgust he felt himself bound and tied to an old fashioned sect but little in advance of the previous generation of country worshipers who had tied their weary horses in the churchyard and wrangled and gossiped over inconsequential things.

Some of the newer religious bodies set aside the things that had so nagged his soul. They did not foster such incongruous things as social suppers, raffles and price smashing sales on the eve of Christ's birthday. They seemed, in the main, to be concerned with Christ's love and the perpetual outpouring of the warmth from His spirit rather than in grubbing in impracticable ways for cash.

Some of them spoke of cosmic justice; others of great silences; but the majority of them simply affirmed that God is love, and having dedicated themselves to that proposition went about wearing the look that such a thought would paint on the face of a mortal.

It seemed not to matter so much whether

one had been a baptist, a lutheran, a presbyterian, an episcopalian, or a methodist so long as one believed in the great love.

All of this, of course, meant a sure passing of the old: old vestments; old customs; old beliefs; old clergymen. The Rev. Mr. Creston patted the skirt of his frock coat where it lay across his knee. After all, wasn't it better so? It was the eternal plowing under by humanity of out worn ideals. This new religious movement was not so new as it was old. It was a mingling and mixing of ancient philosophies and creeds; the same bits of ecstatic melody of being that were blown over the earth by the first breeze the first day after creation.

Frequently, in the past few months, Mr. Creston had looked up from his own immediate affairs to view the lively tide coming over the land. Many of his own parishioners no longer sought him for guidance; many of them gave up their sittings in the church, and came no more, and meeting them on the streets the discerning old clergyman read by their awakened faces that the tide had caught them up.

Secretly, he was glad though that very gladness dug at the foundations of his life. Tran-

sition from threadbare garments to new modish apparel is frequently attended by excitement, and when a large proportion of a nation changes the garments of its soul some few persons are bound to stand about shivering in the interval. Such an one did Mr. Creston find himself to be.

This odd child was bringing the truth home to him. She had raised questions he could not answer. She was ready to be led, but where could he lead her? Had he a right to lead her in the old paths?

The door into the guild hall burst open.

"Mr. Creston! Mr. Creston!" someone called sharply, "please come and count the receipts—believe we have taken in enough to buy the new stove and furnish the pantry."

The clergyman sighed and arose.

"I'm sorry you have to go back, Mr. Creston. I'll never go back!"

"Come to the rectory and we'll have a long talk some day, will you, child?"

"Yes," Toy replied happily. But she never went to the rectory, because in a short time Mr. Creston was transferred to a neighboring city where enmeshed in more webs of the same

weaving he toiled through troublous days, and in the moil of his new parishioners' perplexities he lost touch with those of his former charge.

As the weeks went on the memory of that hour in the church assumed an almost holy significance to Toy; one person had listened and agreed and had understood. Granted absence with honor from the hateful ham carrying task her soul felt release.

On another day, through a curious circumstance, Toy found release again; release from the dullness and monotony of loveless days into a bright realm filled with the expansive charm of love.

There was a little girl at school who sat just ahead of Toy and was shunned by all the other children though no one knew just why. Little whisperings of zealous mammas to:

"Let her alone, dear!"

"Her father is rich, but—well, you'll know some day."

"Be polite to her, but don't play with her on any account."

Mincing fearful don'ts that were worse than damns; that profaned the beautiful rich coun-

try of childhood, and curdled sweet souls. Bars and fences put up by petty parents who in their abominable little goodnesses were blinded by narrowness.

The obnoxious child's name was Eloise. Her hair was brushed into long slick braids. Her clothes were expensive and not at all suited to her age nor to her size. She was freighted with rings and bracelets, and she looked very uncomfortable and sorrowful. Whatever it was that was wrong with her scheme of life it was evident that it was quite outside her own making, for her eyes were clear and honest and her infrequent smile bewitching.

Toy, looking attentively in her direction one day, found her attractive. She decided to disobey. She disobeyed almost constantly, and though she was punished by the housekeeper for her small offences, and incarcerated in a dim room she never failed to feel stimulated by her acts of insubordination. Her life was ruled by older persons who were uncharitable and unfeeling, so in disobeying the prescribed regime she was, on the other hand, obeying a deeper impulse implanted by nature that

caused her to reach out in search of the big prize called love.

Toy cultivated Eloise. Not openly in the schoolroom, but on the stairs; in the corridors; on the street. One day she went home with her. She felt no chagrin in openly accompanying another little girl who for some hidden reason was set apart by unpopularity. Toy was a born little mediator just launched on the broad and sunny way.

The two little girls chatted and swung their books. Eloise was openly jubilant at having discovered a friend. They walked toward the heart of the city.

Finally Eloise waved toward a large imposing brick establishment:

"I live there!" she said proudly.

"Is it a museum?" interrogated Toy, gazing with awe at the imposing façade.

"It's Joumel's Turkish Baths. Joumel is my father. We have a great many people every day."

The word "Turkish" set Toy's fresh little soul to quivering; something Oriental! Odd! Bizarre! She used colorful words in speaking to her inner self. With them she had built a

stout barricade that held away the ravening hordes of people that did not understand.

"We can go into the cooling room, if you like," Eloise volunteered. "Sometimes the ladies there give me candy."

So they made their way upward to a large dim room where strange white shapes lay about on narrow cots. The two little girls stood staunchly and solidly in their thick school shoes like timid strangers in a land of pigwidgeons.

Suddenly a white shape on one of the cots turned and raised its head.

"See who's spying around! Two of you today—that means double chocolates. Come here, dearies."

Toy found herself engulfed in a sweetish, moist embrace. The lady was large and jovial and her smile was heavenly.

"Your hair is so pretty!" Toy exclaimed, compelled into speech by a surge of admiration.

The shape on the adjoining cot was suddenly agitated. It heaved and turned ponderously.

"Bottled sunshine, lovey,—it don't cost

much to get it, but it costs dear to wear it—what say, Fluff?"

"I ain't complainin'," returned Toy's lady acidly.

"Pity old Marsden can't see you now—'she's all rouge and cologne and business,' he says to me, 'no sentiment! Now you got sentiment, Olive,' he says to me, 'but I s'pose sentiment's too wearing in your line.' But you do like the kids, don't you, Fluff? . . . . Who's the new one?"

"My name is Toy."

"What a funny name!" Toy's lady held her off and looked at her smilingly, "but don't you be one, girlie, don't let people make a toy of you and snuggle you, and kick you, and all the rest of it."

"All right," mused Toy adoringly, "I won't be—what my name says if you tell me not to—and I won't be a leaf either!"

"What's that?" the blonde person cuddled her gently.

"A leaf is what you turn into if you go on floating with the stream."

"What do you know about the stream?"

"I know it's made of people who do things

that don't count. Shop for foolish things; buy one day and take back the next; eat a lot; drink too much; and cheat; and people who carry ham and salad right past Christ's picture."

"My God!" exploded Fluff.

"Yes, yours and mine," Toy replied soberly. "I'm glad you spoke of Him. My minister, Mr. Creston, speaks of Him often and he knows it isn't right to go to Him with trays and dishes, but the best way is to sit quietly and look into His beautiful face."

Fluff sat bolt upright and gathered Toy onto her knees.

"How'd you get in here, baby? Do your folks know you come here with Eloise?"

"No, I disobeyed!"

"Well, I'm gonna tell you about me when I was a little girl. I had a sweet blue dress and a new kitten, and my ma had combed my hair up with a cherry bow. My hair was the color of yours then,—and she told me to stay to home while she was away. Well, a farmer's boy come along going to the fair and I coaxed him to take me, too, and after we got there an awful storm came up and we had to go to the boy's uncle's house to stay all night, and when

I got home next day ma had died from worrying and excitement and her weak heart."

"Did she love you?" questioned Toy. It was so enchanting to speak of love with someone who had it first hand.

"She loved me more than anything in the world."

Fluff looked off over Toy's head and across the room filled with shrouded forms and out of a half open window.

"Don't never disobey your mother again, dearie."

"Haven't any," whispered Toy relaxing on Fluff's full, warm breast. "Wish you were my mother. Nobody ever kissed me before, or cuddled me."

Then Fluff kissed her mightily and cuddled her breathlessly and called her a "beautiful one." Suddenly she set her on the floor and admonished:

"Now run home and don't ever come here again, and remember never to be a toy, nor that other thing you said — a leaf! Bye bye, baby."

"I'll remember you all my life!" gasped Toy, "— I'll think of the kisses when I'm all

alone and frightened at thunder and lightning. When I think of you I'll always be happy. Will you be happy, too?"

"Sure thing, doll baby. Now hurry along!"

Toy waved a brave farewell from the door.

Fluff turned over and breathed heavily until the clock struck six, when she rose tumultuously, saying:

"Damn! I overslept myself and I got a dinner date with a rich Johnny at seven."

CHAPTER III

ONE day Toy made a final decision that had to do with her religious convictions.

As she opened her eyes in her lonely little bed a bell tolled.

The sound was flung out into the hush of an early Sunday morning. It beat against her childish nerves. As the full, clear call melted mysteriously into a monotone it seemed vibrant with messages in passing.

It was an odd thing—this vast colorful sound that one could not see—that loomed across the consciousness like a masterly commanding voice, and then was suddenly one with the silent moving air.

The boom-clang-lang of the bell woke in her a strange exaltation of spirit and then she thought with a smile of the probable sexton at its base. A commonplace person in jeans, or in ill fitting Sabbath garments, his coat laid aside on a convenient chair while small duties were puttered over in shirt sleeves. His do-

main quite drab . . . . lines of palely varnished straight back chairs . . . . a close basement kitchen where the guild ladies worked feverishly once a week getting a community dinner, and where tall rows of plates and cups reposed in a dim silence redolent of hurried soapy washings between times. Ghostly echoes of strident controversies lurked among the pillars; violent expoundings of theories and opinions; noisy intolerance; bickerings over the price of provisions; little worried consultations over coal and pew rents; little malicious whisperings about this person and that; all these things went on under the great sweet bell that called Christ to His home.

Toy wondered if He enjoyed it when He came. If He found satisfaction among the piles of hotly disputed quilting, or had any happiness in viewing the petty jealousies over the washing of His altar cloth. Everywhere there seemed to be a linking of the sublime with the dreary commonplace.

Suddenly a resolution clutched the child's heart. She would go into no church ever again! Instead she would stray into a sunlit

field and select a rugged stone and kneel at its base and her prayer would simply be:

Dear God, please help me to separate the miserable small things that don't matter from the big things that count.

CHAPTER IV

AT THE age of fourteen, that age of shy silences and rude outbursts; that age of beautiful inner dreams and outward awkwardness, Toy's father viewed the forming contour of her ankles, and thought best to have some one more closely associated with his daughter than a set of irresponsible servants.

Brule Ashworth spent a whole evening away from his friends to settle the welfare of his child. He looked through a brown embossed address book. He studied the faded faces of various feminine relatives bound in the dull confines of an old album. Finally he fitted an address in the book to a picture in the album.

He drew a large sheet of paper from his desk and proceeded to get the matter of his child's future life off of his mind in a few well chosen sentences. He said something of this sort:

My dear Cousin Henrietta:

It is some years since I had the pleasure of visiting your father and renewing my acquaintance with your charming self. I have kept track of you, however, during the interval and know you are at present alone and not in affluent circumstances.

Perhaps you know I have a daughter growing up. She needs the attention of a well balanced woman. My memory of your studious and methodical habits impels me to turn to you in this crisis.

Would you consider a home with us where your chief duty would be the supervising of Toy's mental and moral growth? I will make ample allowance for all your needs and if you feel that you can accede to my request please put my mind at rest on the matter at an early day. I will send your railway tickets immediately upon a favorable reply.

Yours very sincerely,

BRULE ASHWORTH.

Cousin Henrietta's name and the number of her house in the brown address book had remained the same for years; her picture had stared out from the leaves of the worn album, unchanged, in its rusty, old fashioned sepia

finish; neither the unpretentious address of a house on a shabby street in a western town, nor the dimly etched photograph of a thin faced spinster could give any advance clue to the real Henrietta who wrote a hurried letter of acceptance; sold her ragged carpets and decrepit furniture, placed her wooden dwelling in the hands of a real estate agent, clutched her out of date cape about her thin shoulders and with a smug smile boarded an eastward bound train and handed the conductor the ticket bought by Brule Ashworth with a grand gesture of casting her old tiresome life to the winds, and accepting with rigid complaisance what the good Lord had sent her in the way of unexpected riches and good fortune.

Her fellow-passengers in the Pullman, if they saw her at all, saw an unattractive, wizened person, crouching close to the polished window pane hour after hour as the long train plunged over valley and plain. Henrietta was actually repellent; repellent in body; in manner; in soul. Some aging souls grow luscious and ripe and bursting with sweetness; others shrivel and dry on the stem. Any-

one going into a garden would pick a rose holding fragrance, its petals lit with the joy of promise. No one would stop at a bush and pluck hard crackled berries. In the garden of life Henrietta had chosen to annex herself to the sere and homely, which accounts for her never having been picked, by friend, by lover, by child, by dog. Even the old postman, back on the unpretentious street, in the western town threw her infrequent mail into the hallway and hurried along. He had friends all down the street and his genial heart warmed to them all. For many a dainty lass he had carried valentines, love letters, wedding cards, and last of all house furnishing catalogues. He exchanged quips about jell; whooping cough; colic; stocks; weather; politics, fishing; sciatica; and religion. Everybody was his friend, that is everybody but Henrietta. She was nobody's friend.

And here she was plunging along at forty miles an hour bound toward a warm, rich, little personality already bruising itself among human weeds. These are the things in life that are past understanding; these

cruelties directed toward unprotected childhood.

Henrietta's face was wreathed with lines like an old stump that set deep in an inaccessible wood might be wreathed with a cluttered growth of poisonous vine. Her narrow stoical mind was like an old iron safe to which no one knew the combination. Automatically she disliked everything that anyone else cared for. She was malicious, spiteful, tricky and altogether unlovely.

She regarded the unknown little girl, Toy, as a convenient wedge wherewith she might pry loose advantages for herself from her cousin's household.

The long train finally came to the journey's end and poured its human cargo out on a dimly lit platform under a cavernous shed. All the hopes, fears, ambitions, longings that had been shut in its sooty interior and whisked madly forward through three sunny days and three moonlit nights, were loosed on the world.

The thief, the salesman, the school teacher, the professor, the adventuress and Henrietta were disgorged to go their own ways. No-

where in the cool glistening mountain crevices; in the rich fruitful valleys; in bubbling streams silvered under the high moon; in the kind, open hearted, little towns clustering close to the tracks; in the big cities spire sprinkled, parked and prosperous; in spicy groves of dark cedar; in deep, stony cuts; on high, splendid summits; nowhere in any of these places did the thoughts of the thief, the salesman, the school teacher, the professor, the adventuress and Henrietta swerve from themselves.

Nowhere were they touched by scene or view more than momentarily as a dog is aroused to look around by a passing automobile hub. The great engine panting and guiding from sunrise to sunset, meant nothing to them. Its puff, puff, puff, as it wound and climbed, dipped and slid, fell on deaf ears. Its cry of "see these hills; this fairy gorge; this pink and cream sand; this and this and this" had been matched three times a day by a more welcome sound as the large waiter from the dining car forward lurched heavily through the train shouting: "Firs cawl foh

dinnah,—breakfas,—or suppah—" according to the time of day.

Now as the motley crowd, lugging its baggage, umbrellas and bundles, passed the tired engine the majestic old fellow asked of each:

"Well—?"

The thief cast a shivery glance upward along the steamy, iron side and murmured through thin lips:

"You beat 'em, old boy! Landed me safe! They'll never get me now! So long."

The salesman confided:

"Damn uncongenial crowd—glad that's over!"

The clergyman said precisely:

"Dear, dear—such strange persons traveling about these days—one never knows—ah!—there's the dear, old bishop—"

The school teacher glanced at the puffing engine a bit timidly and sighed as she came out of freedom and went back to bondage:

"Six weeks are so short—and the school year is so long."

The professor told the kind, old engine that:

"You shook so I couldn't do a thing with

the notes for my new book. Horrible road bed! Can't understand it—excessive fares and all that and so little comfort!"

The adventuress squealed:

"Bye, bye, ol' dear. You're pretty swift, but gimme the old town and the old gait!"

As Henrietta sidled along she complained:

"My conscience alive! I know I'm a fright; imagine asking anybody to wash and comb in a coop like that, and I'll never get over that terrible old lady in the Chicago sleeper who read the Bible at meals an[illegible] smoked in the lavatory."

Think of it! The old engine's eyes we[illegible] dripping with tears; the old heart was s[illegible] the old, wheezing voice stuttered and sig[illegible]

"I tried so hard to show it all to them [illegible] they none of them saw—they none of [illegible] saw"—the iron throat gurgled and cou[illegible]

"Gee!" commented the engineer, [illegible] I'll fetch the old girl into th[illegible] ho[illegible] some repairs on her horga[illegible]

Henrietta disliked to hav[illegible] tened upon her until the ri[illegible] had been gone through wi[illegible] blings came to nothing as

structed the chauffeur to meet his western relative and attend to her comfort.

She bounced about in the plum colored interior of her cousin's limousine like a dry, little kernel of corn following its introduction to an agitated griddle. Before the sun had closed the eventful day she was duly installed and set up in her position as guide to a wonderful, soft eyed, luminous souled child.

She had not one thing to offer the child; she might have lent assistance to a black, g spider swi g in his web, but the gy of a sp mains unexplained Henriet ceive no definite lation ev he critic fourteen, at the veet sum , little Toy be- ge of a spinster whose as a st illed with un- es and elties; thus the oy's j gan and she a w was assuming form e guidance of le p

CHAPTER V

"MEN," snarled Cousin Henrietta, "men are vile creatures!"

"But father is a man, and so is Edgar, the chauffeur," Toy offered meekly in contradiction to this smothering and wholesale indictment.

"I am speaking of outside men," snapped Henrietta. "Never let me catch you conversing with a man, nor a boy. I forbid it."

On this particular day Cousin Henrietta was sitting, a stiff and uncompromising figure, at Toy's elbow while the bewildered child choked down a luncheon for which she had no appetite.

Meals eaten in jangling discord paved the way for frequent and severe fits of indigestion, and every meal, attended by deft servants, at which Toy consumed rich, expensive foods under the austere eye of Cousin Henrietta, provided fresh martyrdom three times a day.

Cousin Henrietta disliked children in general and Toy in particular. It paid her to con-

ceal her feelings toward Toy, but she never tolerated other children about the house to visit her lonely little charge.

To Toy's eager running questions:

"What is behind the stars, Cousin Henrietta? What was the earth made for? Why are we here? What are we for? What am I for?" Henrietta replied:

"Don't annoy me with nonsensical questions! Eat your food and drink every bit of your chocolate or I'll be obliged to punish you. How do you expect to grow strong if you go mooning about the stars and leave your meals?"

How, indeed!

Toy lived from day to day in a blighting atmosphere. Her keen little brain wilted at times. Cousin Henrietta was so out of tune with the world that even in her infrequent soft moments she was sharp edged and hard to bear, and Toy had quickly learned that these softer moments only thinly covered a sea of molten emotions ready to pour forth in stinging injustice.

Fresh from her western town where she had had no authority over anything save her shab-

by gray cat and a cringing corner grocer, Cousin Henrietta bristled importantly before the servants in Ashworth's house. She was domineering and autocratic in her treatment of them. But poor worms as she thought them to be, they were more worthy of respect than this loud spoken woman who had suddenly appeared to rule them.

"When she ain't heckterin' and pesterin' us," wailed one of the maids into the sympathetic ears of the cook, "she's squintin' at the neighbors outa some window or nother."

The crass provincialism of Cousin Henrietta stood revealed before the servants. She was so far from the sophistication of poise as to be quite unaware of the fact that angrily shouted orders invited refusals; that prying eyes were not ladylike eyes.

Cousin Henrietta systematically overworked and underpaid every one whom she employed. Her harsh tongue and ungovernable temper descended upon the household like rocks thrown into a pool whose consequent disturbance widens and widens in increasing circles.

If Cousin Henrietta had stolen Toy's diamond crescent the police would have had her,

but the stealing of Toy's right to peaceful, sane development was written in no public record. Behind many a weary soul there is the sly and early theft of hope; of faith in the goodness and beauty of the world.

Who can say what particular agency turns blessings into blight?

Into Toy's maturing brain, day by day, were flooding moods; those two edged things that are sometimes gift and sometimes curse. Cousin Henrietta had no knowledge of moods other than her own, which were dull, drab things of no particular significance. To her there was no golden charm in the delicacy of a tender thought; no fierce elation in the fiery clutch of desire; all moods not kin to her own meant waywardness; waywardness meant wickedness; wickedness must be downed.

Approaching moods produced in Toy a desire to hang from a window and stare into the branches of the plum tree on the terrace and forget her meals; or to smile at a passing boy, a towsled dog at his heels. These slight expandings of hers toward the old world were invariably punished with swift and terrible zeal.

She was shut in somewhere and made to learn verses. The place of her incarceration had, after a series of trials in other rooms, fallen upon the bathroom. Toy shut into a sunlit bedroom with her moods was not a Toy punished, but, to Cousin Henrietta's way of thinking, a Toy liberated still further toward the evil arising in her own mind.

Cousin Henrietta, who slammed the door on the wayward child and left her in solitary confinement to ponder her sins and show proper repentance accompanied by tears, returned to find a smiling, rosy mite curled contentedly on a divan and floating in rapturous dreams.

The spartan spirit of the woman, that was determined to break the soft sweet mysteriousness of the child, cast about for ways and means and finally settled upon the tiled confines of the bath as a sure means of bringing about capitulation. So, whenever life came along with a song and touched the little girl's heart with his magic notes, and her eyes, and her lips, shone and curved into responsiveness, and her heart throbbed out an answer — there was always Cousin Henrietta standing in between. It was she who caught life's call and intercept-

ed Toy's answer. Both sank into the mire of her chilly, unawareness, and so life, whom a good God had sent to Toy with sweet messages, never reached her except stripped to bareness and sterility. All that came to her were distorted echoes; wraiths of other people's happiness floating by quite out of reach.

Wantonly Cousin Henrietta endangered the maturing child's health by forcing her to sit in a stuffy room motionless for hours under the horrid strain of being adjudged wicked. If Cousin Henrietta had been wise she would have chosen judicious exercise for her charge, but Cousin Henrietta was not wise; — she was of that ignorant cult that uses fists and brutality where intelligence employs diplomacy. In depriving Toy of daily healthful exercise she blocked the most important physiological laws of her organization. She was damming up her stream of well being. To cram down totally meaningless columns of words, Toy was given to understand, would somehow offset her natural badness. So alone with the blank expanse of white tile Toy juggled the question back and forth in her immature consciousness

until she reached a solution that seemed to her to fit the case to a satisfactory degree of nicety.

She would create a world of her own. A world of dear imaginary people. In moments of stress she would retire into the kingdom of her own mind and be received there by her loving subjects. She would dream night and day and though Cousin Henrietta flogged her to death she would carry with her the wonderful troupe of dainty kind folk; her prince in the milk white airship; her butterflies; her mountain flowers; happy brooks; bright colored birds singing ever and ever so high on the tips of green trees; all this dear silent world that lived in her rare little brain no one could ever reach—for no one should ever know it was there!

Much to Toy's elation her class in school was set to work a few hours each week with colored clays. To most of the pupils this diversion in a monotonous round of dull tasks was lightly taken and easily forgotten, once it was over.

To Toy the moist, plastic clay was another way out of torment; another pathway to freedom. She threw herself into her modeling

with wild intensity. When the class was dismissed after its short hour's work she waited with breathless tremblings till the great day came round again. The repressed moods, desires, hopes in her turbulent small breast worked themselves out of her nimble finger tips.

The headmaster coming through the class room one day caught up the model of a rabbit from her sticky hands and glanced interestedly at her warm, flushed face.

"Hmm! Extraordinary grasp!" he murmured to himself, and aloud, "I shall see about your going on in a more definite way."

What he saw was Cousin Henrietta, who flatly informed him she would listen to no such nonsense as an artistic career.

"The child's head is quite turned enough as it is!"

"But, dear madam, there is every evidence of great ability. It is our duty to foster these signs."

"Fudge! Stuff!" cried Cousin Henrietta, "Look at me—I had no money wasted upon me."

The head master did look at her and he looked away.

"Too bad—too bad!" he mused, "sorry, indeed, to thwart so unmistakable a gift."

As he descended the stone steps of Brule Ashworth's house, he mumbled, as the doctor had mumbled at Toy's birth:

"Confound such a woman!"

So Toy was obliged to content herself with the weekly hour. Very shortly after the conversation with Henrietta the head master stopped at Toy's chair one day and left a parcel with her.

"Take it home with you and fashion what you see about you. Try always to make each model quite perfect; if it is fruit—make it glow with ripeness; if it is a face—make it live!"

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

The rapture in the child's voice brought swift lines of compassion about the head master's mouth for he had intimate acquaintance with the griefs of art.

Toy took her clay home and hid it away with jealous care. She got it out carefully whenever she dared, worshipfully unwinding its layers of wrappings with reverent touch. Several weeks after the master had made her

this gift she fashioned a startling likeness of the grizzled and picturesque old peddler who came now and then to gather waste paper and scraps. Her small sensitive face glowed with the passionate achievement of creation. Her warm, brown ringlets vibrated; rich color suffused her cheeks; her delicate, graceful body pulsated joyously.

Deep in this new ecstasy she was deaf to the opening door. Suddenly a cruel hand struck the image from her grasp. Cousin Henrietta threw the peddler to the floor and ground him under her heel. As her square, ugly foot descended on the pink clay it was crushed into a fearful caricature. Toy heard the silent agonized scream of her heart's child. The kindly eye of the old peddler was torn and elongated into wolfish senility. It looked up at her from that spot in the floor long days after the globules of clay had been swept away and successive coats of wax applied to hide the spot where the murder of the pink clay peddler had occurred.

Because of the curtailing of her simple desires and impulses Toy presently developed into a furtive little creature. At eighteen she

was silent and sad. Her face, usually pallid, was suffused at rare intervals with a delicate pink that leaving her gleaming brow, nose and chin untouched by the quick color gave her the appearance of a Killarney rose with snow brushed in among its petals. She was called on in various ways to begin playing her part in the great game of life and she was unprepared and unfitted to do so.

She had no one to love. She despised her Cousin Henrietta. She had long since failed to find stimulation in the remembrance of the kindly faced clergyman and the benign, mosaic Christ of her lonely childhood. She trusted no one. Her kindly impulsiveness had turned into secrecy. To her perverted sense of things she seemed to be lost in a black fog where no one of the right sort ever passed; where no warm hand groped forth for hers; where no one wanted her.

But suddenly one day after her twentieth birthday some one did want her. That someone was a boy. He was twenty-two, straight and slim. From his dark, kind eyes shone the accumulated wisdom of thinking generations.

His thick, black hair waved over a broad, smooth brow.

Toy met him one afternoon in the park where she had gone to find relief from a dull, thumping pain in her head. They encountered each other at a curve in the gravel path near the lagoon, and they smiled at each other with the freemasonry of the misunderstood.

The boy said, bookishly and dramatically:

"By Jove! Do you know you are a stunner?"

"Do I stun you?" interrogated Toy wistfully.

"Rath-er!" drawled the boy. "See here, I know a deep place behind those cedars where there is moss like velvet, and blue and yellow flowers and violets. Shall we go look at them?"

"Do you like flowers?" Toy was breathless.

"Love 'em!" rejoined the boy laconically.

Day after day they met each other in the park for a few stolen hours. While other girls of Toy's age were skating, dancing, sewing, studying, guided by wise and kindly parents and making ready for the inevitable rush

of debuts and fêtes, Toy's eager, slim, little feet were treading the exotic paths of a mad first love.

Jerold Wentry was a dreamer and he was as passionately fond of trees and birds and open spaces as was his little sweetheart. He was a lonely sort of chap with no living kin. In his stalwart frame there was nurtured an extreme delicacy of soul. He lived in lodgings close to town in a meagre style and he held some monotonous job on a big daily that he explained casually as "holding down the state desk, you know—" and then with a deprecating smile that lifted his full, firm lip in a fascinating way over his even teeth, "not much for a hulking brute like me to do, is it?"

Presently Jerry's whole life was filled with Toy; with her laugh; her eyes; her glinting curls; her warm, quick kisses that fell against the fresh curve of his cheek; on his chin; the tip of his ear; as they scuffled merrily through underbrush at the lake's rim; or rowed in leaky boats; or tramped the open road; or explored dim corners in cool ravines; or drank

iced drinks in tall, frosted glasses in queer, little shops wedged in between tall buildings.

At night Jerry labored away at his job on the paper so that he might keep himself in clean linen. He laid something devoutly away and spent his small surplus on flowers and books for Toy.

They had wonderful hours together—these two gaily abandoned wayfarers on life's illumined path. Jerry never saw Toy at home. At the very beginning of the affair it had been forbidden. He was a nobody and poor. Cousin Henrietta had questioned a number of willing gossips and she had his history in complete and voluminous form. It was duly laid before Ashworth while, simpering and elated, Cousin Henrietta stood back to witness the smashing of young love in the bud. Ashworth laid his seal of disapproval on Jerry in no uncertain tones:

"Quite right—quite right of you, Henrietta. I'll have no such puppy love nonsense. The impudence of the fellow to presume to approach my daughter when he's barely earning a crust of bread. And who, as you say, was his father? A mere pettifogger! A per-

son who grubbed over a dirty desk in his shirt sleeves." Ashworth picked a bit of imaginary lint from his fashionably cut dinner coat and ordered peremptorily:

"Tell Toy I should like to speak to her here at once."

During the hectic conversation that followed Toy gathered that if Jerry, or Jerry's father,—it wasn't quite clear which,—had been somebody and hanged the disgrace might have been borne, but to be nobody and poor was to be sunk in a state bordering on the impossible if not criminal.

"But, father, Jerry is fine and true and he loves me!"

"Rot!" condemned Ashworth, "Utter rot! Don't mention him again! Don't see him! Don't write to him!"

Toy did not mention him again except to herself and that she did very frequently and with tears dimming her soft, young eyes. Her father's ruthlessness raised a corresponding bit of iron in her own soul. She determined to see Jerry at all cost. She determined to tell falsehoods, if necessary, for Cousin Henrietta's hardness was forcing her step by step toward the pit of deceit.

In the comprehensive healing outdoors Toy and Jerry continued to live a real life. They laughed and sang and day dreamed under the wide sky; they haunted clear, bright, little lakes that were set like flashing eyes in the deep sockets of the hills; they roamed through thickly wooded places striking spiciness from twigs and leaves; they rejoiced together at the revealings of long past upheavals of nature that had raised hills and smoothed valleys in a turbulence turned quiet. The circles of chattering, card playing people that poured in and out of the semi-fashionable houses frequented by Cousin Henrietta saw nothing of Toy; pool table gatherings and road house merrymakers saw nothing of Jerry for to Toy and Jerry had been given the matchless elation born of an appreciation of nature's glories.

From enforced outdoor hours their flesh was hard and glowing; their eyes were clear and their spirits were full of froth and merriment. Jerry was so quick of wit and so quietly understanding that in a few short months much of the horror of Toy's life had been wiped away. What did it matter if

Cousin Henrietta was wildly angry; brutally rude, or blindly selfish—Jerry understood. Jerry's touch was warm and kind. His eyes saw deep into her own and found the trouble there and his comforting voice coaxed her from somber moods into rollicking joy. Together they dashed courageously toward life's problems grappled, and overcame them with cheery violence.

Now and then a timorous young girl, a new acquaintance, perhaps, would call on Toy who, pleasantly elated would dance into the sober drawing room to embrace her caller eagerly. Cousin Henrietta was never far behind. A poisoned dagger was the piece of property best suited to her medieval trend of thought, but as modern laws prevented any such weapon she killed Toy's friendships in more subtle ways. Perhaps she strode toward the caller and blurted forth:

"We have all the books we need. No use trying to sell us anything!"

To Toy's agonized, "Why, she goes to my latin class, Cousin Henrietta!" Cousin Henrietta would snort:

"Humph! So dressed up, thought she must want to sell something."

Perhaps Cousin Henrietta would pry with little delicacy and no skill into the family affairs of the little bewildered caller, sneer at her mother's judgment or make scathing remarks about the ability of her father. Yet, in spite of her abominable meanness, Cousin Henrietta was asked about here and there, as Toy's father was so rich it was necessary to call with more or less regularity on Cousin Henrietta for contributions to this and that form of charity and near charity.

"Forget everything she says as fast as you can, dearest." Jerry urged upon Toy. "Learn to forget whatever is disagreeable; learn to discard; to hold only to bright happy thoughts—she'll ruin you if you don't."

"Cousin Henrietta is a terrible person, isn't she, Jerr?"

"The worst ever," he replied solemnly, "the very worst ever. She's damnable!"

"If I should go to the farthest island in the south seas I believe her voice would follow me there. I believe I'd see groups of cannibals standing about under the palms discuss-

ing what she had told them about me. Oh, Jerr, I wish I had a sister or a mother!"

"I'll have to be your sister and mother and husband, sweet. I'll try to be everything you've missed. We are getting quite a tidy lump in the bank, but it's not enough yet. When it is—we'll make a dash for it!"

Through Jerry Toy met, now and then, some of the world's real people; real women who were brave and courageous; women in politics; in industry; men who were quiet spoken and learned; gentle folk who had little means and lived on that little in harmony and content. Jerry took her to his lodgings and the people there interested her. There was a lank Englishman with heart trouble and an adoring wife. From the latter Toy learned how to sew and embroider. Then there was the nervous scientist who wrote madly in the miniature orchard behind the house pursuing fame every waking moment and leaving other men to pursue his wife. But they pursued her in vain for the odd little woman loved her wild-eyed spouse and knew it would all come right in the end. Her sweet voiced descriptions of Paris and Vienna filled Toy with

bliss. Then there was the morose man who "had wasted his days in a bank," who solemnly handed her books to read; and the chatty maiden lady who was always writing for the movies, my dear, but never seemed to get any answer. Then there was the inevitable boarding house child who dropped greasy crumbs all over the chairs, and a Polish furnace man who was romantic. Jerry loved all these odd drifters, and so of course Toy loved them too. She loved slipping away Sunday afternoons, when Cousin Henrietta lay down for her nap, to go down to Jerry's lodgings where she rocked back and forth delightedly in his chintz chair with the bedroom door open for the sake of decorum.

One of the most curious creatures whom advancing years had pried from the safety of a secure and cloistered life and had thrown into this moving stratum of rovers, was a thin, completely faded woman. Her clothes, her eyes, her skin, her ideas had all joined in a confused and jumbled downfall. She was the eleemosynary granddaughter of an illustrious divine. Whereas in her youth she had possessed and worshipped wealth, position and

gayety, she now worshipped at three quiescent shrines . . . . (a) the distant glory of her kinsman . . . . (b) two heavy and battered old brass candlesticks . . . . (c) some obscure old world philosophy. She slept on a lumpy couch turned up against the wall like a side hill, because of a queer internal disorder that made it necessary to coax her fractious organs into proper positions for the night. She played two rôles. In the sanctity of her dull and dusty chamber, as she stooped over odd tasks of needlework, she was merely a forsaken failure floating on gray days to an unnoted end. On her infrequent trips into the street she became a tall figure shamblingly proud. In the shifting of scenes and the change of character she employed but one piece of makeup — a bit of carmine silk, cut on the bias, that ran from the shoulder seam of her rusty black cape to the somber hem. After the old cape had seen years of service she desecrated its genteel shabbiness by sewing on the flaming strip. The riotous color was clearly out of place, stuck on, patched in, palpably dissenting as the old soul herself was dissenting against the retreat of youth . . . .

youth with its rich colors and hot blood . . . . youth with its abandoned song sung in the heat of a noonday sun. Dragged into the quiet pale moonlight of after years the colors and extravagances of youth ranged sad values in the diminishing light. On one hand the wistfully rejuvenated cape bore merely a band of carmine . . . . on the other, it was, to any discerning eye in the passing crowd, a badge of protesting decay.

Then there was the tall, gaunt stranger who drifted in on a rainy night and drifted out again some three weeks later just as every one had grown to depend on his evening tale as a substitute for the movies—which cost too much, anyhow, and necessitated putting on one's boots again after supper.

He and Jerry had sat on the bed and talked while Toy rocked in the chintz chair. He had laid his long, thin hand on her arm and had said:

"Little lady, this boy here knows how to think. It is a gift. Most people only think they think. The man who really thinks chooses a lonely road with fewer and fewer companions as the days advance—that's the price he pays, but it's worth the toll."

One night the gaunt man took them both for a drive. Toy sat contentedly under Jerry's protecting arm and looked intently into the face of the lean traveler, whenever it became visible to her, as the big car plunged out of shadow and swung into moonlit patches. He spoke of worlds she knew not of. As to positions he had filled one at the top of a university and at the bottom of a mine; he had lived in every capital of the world and died a thousand deaths in his own land; he had explored mountains and jungles; he had pursued many creeds to their lairs.

They rode along under the stars; under black trees; a streak of belated gold shone at the horizon; bonfires were reflected in the glassy surface of a twisting stream; the traveler recited poems; ancient and modern; some of his own; he described ruined cities; strange food of far climes; glistening black women bearing burdens; he had personal acquaintance with governors; with kings; with illustrious mummies and his name was Murphy!

The next day he left Mrs. Reel's boarding house to return to a distant city, his portly wife and four babies; a prosaic family where

pies and crocheted shawls flourished winter and summer; a family all balled up in the urgent necessity of neat lives, but for three winging hours, sitting beside Jerry and Toy, his soul had gone free, and neither of his two young friends ever forgot him.

CHAPTER VI

NOT content with Toy's forced promise that she would see no more of Jerold Wentry, Cousin Henrietta nagged and fussed and fumed at Ashworth until he employed some one to watch her. He was weary of the constant friction between the two women; weary of Cousin Henrietta's continual spitefulness and faultfinding but too much occupied with his own affairs to take steps to change matters.

A terrible day came around when a thin, light footed person discovered and reported a long trip taken in a canoe on the river by Miss Antoinette Ashworth with the young chap her father had designated as "that odious young cub from the Chronicle."

Ashworth was sitting in the library waiting impatiently for the announcement of dinner. Everywhere the austere hand of Cousin Henrietta was visible; in the stiff arrangements of books; in the parallel lines of Turkish rugs held squarely at the corners by chairs arbi-

trarily placed without regard to comfort or light; in the severe mantel that held no graceful nor delicate ornament, but everlastingly presented an empty cold expanse of religiously dusted wood; in the chaste pictures on the walls in which were presented a stout florid young woman, much clothed, bringing in the cows; an etching called The Dying Willow that produced an unmistakable chill down the spine with its distorted decaying trunk pitching a wealth of shriveling leaves into an icily etched stream on which no human life was visible and which gave the effect of running away into a freezing and empty world beyond the frame. Cousin Henrietta admired this particular picture as much as her arctic mentality was given to the admiration of anything. She thought it in great good taste. She had paid a large price for it—rather she had selected it and Ashworth had paid the price. Toy despised it. It seemed to her to drink all the life out of one's eyes; it made one think of the earth's waste places; it flaunted death and desolation; it was a very vampire of pictures for it drove joy away and was capable of awarding nothing from its

frigidity. Then, there was Sir Somebody going to the hunt; Cousin Henrietta smirked under the touch of distinction this foreign bit seemed to lend; Toy quivered under its crude homeliness. Toy believed the message of a picture should lift the soul and that it should be so hung that it would lift the eyes. She and Jerry had spied a lovely water color in an outlying shop one day; a golden world floating in pale azure the spirit of woman rising in supple pink tinted flesh into a warm eternity. Jerry had bought the picture for her:

"The first ornament to beautify our someday home—we'll get the solid things like stoves and knives and forks when our roll is larger."

Toy had hung the picture in her hideously striped bedroom where each morning she lifted her chin to gaze up at its grateful loveliness. The beautiful nude form spoke a language she understood.

But Cousin Henrietta tore the picture from the wall.

"I won't have such a disgusting display in this house. It is indecent. I shudder at your

lack of modesty. While you are here under this roof in my charge I insist on morality."

"To me your horrible dead willow is immoral. It makes me dreary and sad. It is immoral to dwell on ugliness!" Toy exploded in one of her rare retorts.

It did no good to retort. One soon ran out of breath while Cousin Henrietta had an inexhaustible supply and it was impossible to match her vindictive criticisms.

Brule Ashworth was not thinking of the pictures on the walls as he sat waiting for the dinner hour in his big house. He was not studying the effect of the fiery red hangings, cushions and tapestries on his temper and general well being. He had too blunt a mentality for that.

It did not occur to him that because, some years before he had secured the services of Cousin Henrietta, who had covered the walls with hideous papers, surrounded him with obnoxious colors, cut away every appearance of beauty and softness and ease, that he was slowly spoiling the life of his only child.

To Ashworth everything he couldn't understand was "rot." That there was, apart from

a life that demanded shoes, and clothes, and food, another life that existed on harmony and beauty he had no knowledge. He knew that the human stomach must be fed on meat and vegetables—"get the best—don't buy truck!" he had admonished Cousin Henrietta early in her career as administrator of the household affairs—but he did not know that the soul was always equally hungry and that to keep it vigorous and healthy it must be offered flower petals . . . . dreams . . . . the countless beauties that lie waiting harvest all over the marvelous world.

Ashworth was a very rich man; a selfish man; aside from a careful and life long study of the importing business upon which he had flourished, he was an unthinking man. Whenever a problem arose demanding the study of psychological symptoms, he would designate it as rot and shove it away with ruthless hands. So, now, when the telephone bell rang at his elbow and the pinched voice of the detective, who had been shadowing Toy and Jerry, made his report Ashworth laid aside every feeling a father should have of gentle helpfulness toward his child and determined

to get the matter off of his hands as soon as possible, so he might go on living his own life in his own way undisturbed.

Again, Toy's presence was demanded in the library. Quivering with dread she floated into the grim ugly room like a silvery white moth that had mistakenly flown out of the velvet night into a fearsome dungeon.

There they stood face to face; the man who lived for the body and the child who lived for the soul; as far apart as the poles; as unlike as midnight and noon; each as fiercely loyal to inner convictions and desires as savages in a deep wood. Ashworth's background of dull tapestries had been raised by horny hands and he stood uncompromising against its brutal reds and tarnished golds. Toy's background was still shadowy; in the forming; it was being supplied by Jerry's loving hands.

"See here, Toy. This conduct of yours is little short of shameless!" stormed Ashworth, "out on the river for hours with a young fool—you are a disgrace to your Cousin Henrietta and me! You have deliberately lied to me and disobeyed and broken your promise."

"It is not a fair thing to ask of me, father. Have you a right to choose for me the very feelings of my heart? I appreciate your advice and friendly direction, of which I have had very little. I cannot obey unjust commands."

Toy's warm heart with its tender response to all living things was sorely torn between her lover and her sense of duty toward a misunderstanding parent.

"If you knew Jerry you would not ask me to give him up."

"Rubbish!"

"He is very splendid."

"He's a scoundrel! If he was not he would not carry on as he has behind my back. Does he entertain you like a gentleman? Does he invite you to balls? To the opera? Does he have access to fashionable homes? No!" roared Ashworth, "he invites you out onto the streets; he dawdles on rivers; on country roads. He's a savage!"

"When it comes to that, father, there are savages and gentlemen all about. The man who beats his wife while she is cooking his supper is far more savage than the naked

brown man who lies in the sun on a rock and dreams."

Ashworth glanced up at his child from beneath his brows and wondered suddenly if she were quite right in her mind. She had a way of talking such utter drivel that nobody could understand. Some silly rubbish that wretch had poured into her ear, no doubt.

Flayed and scourged by Ashworth's words and at his final:

"Go to your room!" Toy trailed broken and sad up the wide staircase. The filmy white sleeves of her dimity gown clung forlornly to the rounded pink flesh that a few hours before had so sweetly thrilled to nature's voice as it sang in field and stream and sun webbed paths.

It is a ruthless hand that brushes the dew from youthful eyes; that carps and snaps and interferes with love's young song for in the wide world there is no sweeter music; in the journey through life there is no fairer station; in memory no hill so high—so swept with clean clear breezes; in middle life no element that so engenders understanding; in old age no dearer hand to point slimly white

from among the falling shadows toward some lovelier sphere; it is the first touch and the last; the everlasting link; in its soft whisperings are hid the meanings of creation; it is the breathless pearl tipped hush before fulfillment and he who desecrates the sanctity of its beauty, sins. . . .

Brule Ashworth adjusted his necktie. He scowled and his lip curled impatiently. He lighted a cigarette and then shrugging his shoulders left the completion of the matter to his able jailer, Cousin Henrietta, while he hurried away to keep an appointment.

At the top of the stairway Toy sighed and her little feet scraped wearily over the polished surface. The house was unnaturally still; some ominous quality in the heavy air disturbed her. Cousin Henrietta had not assisted at her undoing and that was odd; it was quite unlike her to absent herself from any scene from which she would emerge victorious. Toy rubbed her wrist where Jerry's lips had pressed long kisses.

Suddenly, out of the dimness of the hall a creature half mad with gloating hurled itself on the frail girl. Toy was borne back-

ward and flung into the white tiled room where she had been incarcerated and beaten by Cousin Henrietta so often as a child. After the years that had dragged between again Cousin Henrietta stood over her brandishing a stout cane. It descended on her pink-white flesh with a cracking swish. At the first blow Toy screamed in an agony of terror. The sound of the commotion reached the servants below and they stood about in hushed uncertain attitudes. Again and again in a crescendo of fury the cane descended till the white dimity gown hung in shreds and the tender flesh under it quivered in red and angry welts.

Cousin Henrietta spent her strength and flinging Toy from her gasped:

"You cheat! You liar! Reform schools are built for creatures like you. Into one you'll go before you drag your father's name in the dust. If I cannot teach you decency we'll see what bolts and bars will do!"

Quivering and weak Toy rested her bruised body against the cool tile and suddenly things became very clear to her. The time had come when Cousin Henrietta must lay aside

her sceptre; Toy saw her very clearly now as an utterly ignorant person with whom further association was quite impossible. Suddenly the years of Ashworth's indifference were reviewed by his unwanted child; suddenly her mind rose beyond harsh limitations and Toy was free.

They had forced a decision upon her. With red and stinging arms and a madly racing heart Toy's whole being was swayed toward Jerry and the last tie that bound her to the ugly house; to her childhood in it; to the people who called it home, was broken. She determined to go to Jerry; to share his name that was rolled disparagingly by other tongues, but fell in golden syllables from her own; to share his narrow bed; his few joys and his countless trials; she was swept along on a rushing river; her father and Cousin Henrietta were fading specks on its shore. The angular woman with the waspish temper could never hurt her again; in a rising delirium of hope she knew her for what she was, an irritating particle in the onward shoe of time.

Toy drew apart from her own weak trem-

bling frame and felt scornful of its frailty. The commands, the repressions, the tortures of the stiff, gaunt house fell away from her and her dainty soul rose clear of the debris of wasted years. Cousin Henrietta had torn the binding cocoon that held the wings of the girl and when the insensible husk fell heavily to the floor a shimmering new born thing made ready to leave its cellhouse.

A maid was called to lug Toy's crumpled form away and Cousin Henrietta retired to her own bedroom. She reveled in the fearful scene and a glow of fierce joy pervaded her till she was so well pleased with herself and the day that she opened her closet door and got out a new hat and tried it on victoriously. She viewed herself from many angles; smoothing her flat stringy hair; biting at her thin lips to bring more pleasing curves into her withered cheeks and making countless short trips back and forth before her mirror. Presently her strident voice could be heard echoing through the hollow halls as she telephoned the milliner and harangued over the price of the hat.

In her prim, too chaste room, Toy slept on

and on in a stupor of utter mental and physical exhaustion. The maid bathed her temples and looked at her raw flesh with pitying eyes as she eased it against the pillows. Carefully she uncoiled and braided the long heavy hair to rest the whirling head.

At midnight Toy awoke. She sat upright trembling with nervous reaction. But she was young and elastic and lithe so that when her tired brain called, "This is the logical hour —escape!" her stiff limbs responded. Stealthily she moved from her bed to her dressing table, from that to her curtained closet. Painfully she drew a dark plain gown over her swollen shoulders and arms and covered their ungainly bulging with a long loose coat. She put a few toilet articles into a night bag and opened the door of her room. The halls; the stairway; the lower floors lay still under the heavy darkness. She felt no regret on leaving her bedroom and her belongings —a place where most young tender maids nest among puffs and cushions, bright plants, dainty silver. There was no expression of her personality in the years' accumulation of articles. Cousin Henrietta had hung the pic-

tures, selected the furniture, bought the gowns. It was all drab and dull and so utterly prim and proper as to be fairly indecent for too much repression of natural instinct in a mistaken striving for modesty, is the most glaring indecency of all.

Toy felt her way toward the staircase and her first step upon it woke a diabolical shriek from the cracking tongues of the dry wood. She stood breathless and waited, but no door opened, no answering sound met her straining ears. The big house slept on and held back its talons and concealed its grimace as young life, seeking freedom, slipped over its darkened surfaces, through its stifling hangings, and skirted its huge hideous furniture.

Toy fumbled with the locks of the heavy doors and, at last, was out in the clear sweet air, a distressed and lovely fairy wandering abroad among the faintly etched mysterious purposes of an outdoor midnight. She hurried and scurried toward the black spires and jagged roofs of the sleeping workshops of the city. She felt no timidity before cavernous doorways, nor under high walls hung thick with inky vines. She plunged unafraid into

black spots and emerged into cobwebby shadows thrown in latticed patterns by corner lights. If the closed eyes of tall buildings saw her hurrying on they sent no dark messengers abroad to stop her; no human being saw nor followed her; no cat slunk across the way and looked stealthily back over a maltese shoulder to catch a scent or a meaning from her flying progress; no dog caught her light footfalls and raised a gossiping voice; unchallenged she passed from the house where she was born while life's pages went on in their everlasting turning.

On a cobbled street, faced with small flourishing shops and laid with car tracks, she found the Chronicle building. A blear eyed person conveyed her to the eighth floor in a dirty elevator and she pushed open the door of the city room in obedience to the direction indicated by the blear eyed person's grimy forefinger.

She had never been to the editorial rooms of the Chronicle before. In her dreams of Jerry at his work there had been mahogany chairs, neat desks, a plant or two perhaps, clean window panes and orderliness. She saw

a wild scene of litter and confusion; men in soiled linen and green eye shades; men gesticulating and yelling; men cramped over mutilated typewriters; men eating cake from a long table filled with soggy pies and pastry covered by a piece of mosquito netting that was more often out of its place than in it; papers billowing and careening everywhere; waste baskets overflowing and above it all the ceaseless click and clatter of pounding keys.

A pert young person approached her:

"Hullo, whatdouwant?"

"Mr. Wentry, please," Toy gasped.

"Over there—third door—go round behind the wardrobe."

As she pushed open the door Jerry looked up into her dilated eyes and read the crisis. He asked her a dozen startled questions; he looked with horror at the livid arms beneath her cape, then he crammed his papers into the desk and went hurriedly out to speak to his chief. He returned to catch his cap from its hook and pilot Toy across the street to an hotel.

One dim light burned over the hotel desk and a sleepy clerk raised a curious eye as the

two presented themselves before him. He recognized Jerry with a brief nod and cast an appraising look at Toy's swollen tear stained eyes.

Jerry leaned across the desk and spoke to him:

"This lady is in distress, she's tired and nervous. She has no place to go and I just want a small parlor, or something of that sort, where I can be with her till morning comes and I can make some fitting arrangements for her."

"Sure, Wentry, fix you out right away." To himself the clerk added: "Some society dame mixed up in a scandal, I s'pose. Wentry will get the story out of her with trimmin's—leave it to him! I'll keep my peepers peeled for the splash on the front page tomorrow."

After scratching his head thoughtfully and looking over his list of vacancies carefully the clerk finally took down a worn key and preceded Toy and Jerry to the elevator.

"Can't fit you out with a parlor or anything de luxe like that. Haven't got 'em lying around empty in an establishment like this.

Over at the Grassmore, where I was before I came here, we had suites and rooms for all occasions—used to gets dukes and presidents and actresses and all kinds of swells over there. The only parlor we got here at the present is full of tables covered with some feller's samples, but I'll give you something at the back that will be comfortable."

So the odd pair sat in a cramped stuffy bedroom and agonized in the deep and terrible throes of despair known to the very young and inexperienced. Jerry took a pillow from the bed and smoothing it across the back of the stiffly upholstered chair settled his little sweetheart against its stalely laundered surface. He perched himself on the spongy bed and they maintained this circumspect attitude till daylight, except for the times when Jerry rose to make Toy more comfortable and to nurse her poor sore arms in his cool palms, or to kiss the tears from her quivering face.

When dawn finally came they had reviewed Toy's whole life. They spoke in whispers for fear of waking some unseen person who snored lustily on the other side of a pair of double doors. In the dim light that flick-

ered through a dusty globe and fell on their huddled forms and strained faces they appeared like two wanderers washed into this cranny by the sweep of unforeseen circumstance waiting drearily till the back wash should carry them out again. They were both determined that Toy should never return again to the hateful reign of Cousin Henrietta.

"We can be married today, can't we, dear?" Toy asked eagerly. "I'll go home with you to Mrs. Reel's boarding house and live in your little room. I can make it ever so pretty with some clean white curtains and a geranium or two. I'll sit in your big chair and mend and darn."

"Oh, darling!" moaned Jerry, "I'm so poor—so infernally, rotten poor. That lump in the bank wouldn't last long if either of us were taken ill, or I lost my job or something else turned up that required cash. Child, I'm afraid! Not for myself—you know I'd starve for you and work myself to the bone, but I'm afraid of the things that might happen to you. You've had clothes and servants and good food—everything!" he totalled helplessly.

"I've not had everything!" stoutly interposed Toy, "for I've not had love."

Then Jerry smothered her dear face again with kisses and looked out over her tumbled curls at the dawn that was climbing up drab walls, sliding over dusty window casings, painting faint lights on dull glass, creeping along sleeping alleys where mysterious bulks resolved into battered trash cans. Looking on such a scene as presented itself from the bleared hotel window was not conducive to joy. A man who had met life and conquered it with flying banners, and risen the next day in such a back bedroom might have turned away from the scene with a smile still on his lips, but to Jerry the sordid scene was an agent of despair.

The discarded and useless objects pitched about on the ground below somehow seemed symbolic of his own ineffectual youth. The frying pan that had failed in its mission because of a severed handle . . . . the dog house so poorly constructed that its fiery inmate had burst through its red and yellow bars . . . . the green jardiniere that leaked . . . . the hassock, burst, and exuding its

stuffing . . . . the crippled lounge . . . . the mouldy picture frame . . . . all utter and abject failures!

The dregs of innumerable back yards and alleys attesting in stark uselessness to innumerable eyes, looking dully down upon their squalor, that life has many hideous spots between the mountain peaks. To a well shod, well tailored man jingling coins in his pocket who is hurrying to a bank director's meeting there can be no arresting call from a messy alleyway, but to the man who is not prosperous, nor complacent, but who looks forth in shivering indecision an unkempt alley is a sharp reminder of Gehenna, that fearsome site into which was thrown the refuse of an ancient city.

So it seemed to Jerry looking out. Bah! ashcans, stuffy lodgings, fried eggs and boarders who bathed once a week—that's what he would take Toy to if she went with him. Fancy putting a delicate flower, the dew still cool on its petals, into such a dank spot and expecting it to do other than wilt.

A look of utter chagrin gathered about Jerry's fine eyes and mouth. Many months

before Toy had selected him for her protector, her lover, her all, and here he was, at the crucial moment of their lives, unable to fulfill the least part of any of these rôles. At least he believed himself unable. A thoughtful chap he was usually clear headed, but like all mortals he made mistakes. He made one now. A bad one. For many obscure and many evident reasons that had to do with his fear of making Toy suffer through privation he refused to marry her.

"It's no use, dearest. We must find another way out."

Toy looked at him with round sorrowful eyes and her heart felt cold and dead. She had flown to him as her last refuge and he was denying her haven.

"I'll tell you," planned Jerry, "let's name over the people you like—not just the ones you know, but the ones you really like—and see if we can't strike on somebody you'd care to visit a while. Now, there's Margaret Wing—"

"She'd ask me a million questions and I couldn't answer one. No, she won't do," replied Toy.

"Joan Moore? She's quiet and reads a great deal—"

Toy counted Joan off on her finger tips. "Her father's an invalid. My breaking in on their methodical round would upset them dreadfully."

"Well, then, what about Doris Meade?"

Toy looked disdainful.

"Oh, Jerry, how can you! You know she is the silliest goose! She belongs to that deplorable clique of almost musicians, almost artists, and almost writers. They hold stupid conclaves in a damp basement and gushingly approve of each other face to face and are ghastly uncharitable once they separate."

"Oh, I have it!" beamed Jerry. "You can visit Clover Dreans. Never mind if she does live in Chicago. I'll run down to see you week-ends, and you know you liked her tremendously when she was here doing settlement work. She must have some other hobby by this time. Her father is tremendously well off, so there'll be no objection raised by your objectionable Henrietta—damn her—if you skip off for an indefinite visit."

"I do like Clover very much," acquiesced Toy.

"I remember Clover asked you to visit her when she was here and I know she meant it. She's the real thing; has sense; doesn't gossip; and I know you'd be happy with her. As soon as it is decently daylight I'll reach her by telephone and do a bit of explaining. You can send your father a note and ask for the gowns and things you'll need. It's the best plan I can think of right now, dear."

"But after that?" begged Toy, "after that —what? I'll never go back to Cousin Henrietta!"

"We'll see then, dear heart—Kind Heaven! If I only dared take you!"

"I'm not afraid, Jerry. Take me home with you. I want your arms, your dear voice, your love—"

But poor misguided Jerry stubbornly shook his head thinking himself wise when he was utterly foolish.

At six o'clock, taking note of Toy's pallor, Jerry ordered some tea, toast, marmalade and eggs with bacon from a sleepy voice at the other end of a buzzing wire. When the

breakfast tray came they pulled out the rickety golden oak table and spread the thick plates and scratched worn silver before the window. Jerry tried hard not to glance out at the ashcans. They had a benumbing effect on him. Presently he was totally absorbed in plying Toy with sugar and toast and watching her white little teeth descend into the golden crusts. They ate every last crumb on the tray and Jerry laughed:

"Whee! That's what would be called vulgarly hungry. Feel better now?"

"Ever so fine!" laughed Toy.

"Guess I'll go down and put in a call for Clover. I'll send up a morning paper for you, or maybe you'd better lie down and get a bit of a nap."

Toy yawned and looked at the spongy bed with its limp gray-white cotton spread.

"I am terribly, terribly sleepy."

Jerry picked her up and laid her tenderly on the sagging mattress. He covered her with his coat, adjusted the shade to darken the room and went out closing the door quietly. Almost immediately Toy fell into a light slumber. She dreamed that she and

Jerry had left the red stone third rate hotel and had gone to a bright little church where a kindly, fussy old clergyman had married them. He said:

"Why, my dear children, don't worry about not having money, or jobs, or clothes, or any of those things. The essential thing is to stand together in the world. All the rest will come perfectly right in the end."

The future seemed just there behind a curtain of rosy mist and, as they stepped out of the church, Jerry's arm was around her and all of a sudden Cousin Henrietta appeared in a towering fury and Toy drew herself proudly erect and said:

"You needn't bother to utter a word! I'm Mrs. Jerry now and I'm going to a home of my own."

Smoothly, airily, as one floats in dreams, she and Jerry went on to a wonderful waiting world.

Finally a voice penetrated her slumber:

"Toy, Toy dear! Wake up! You've slept for two hours and your train goes very soon now. I've bought your tickets and called a taxi and Clover understands perfectly and

will be ever so glad to see you. She and her mother have just returned from Florida, and she said their big house was a bit lonely after the crowded hotels so, you see, you'll really be a comfort to them."

CHAPTER VII

IT was some four weeks since Toy's hurried arrival in Chicago to visit Clover Dreans. Toy and Clover and Clover's mother were having an early luncheon.

"I don't want to gloom away this whole gorgeous afternoon in the drawing room just to meet a stuffy man I never saw before!"

Clover Dreans' creamy shoulders rose and descended in crisp disdain. The pale ribbon rosebud that held the points of her sheer peignoir together rocked turbulently on her breast.

"Clover, dear, you will spoil your complexion if you allow your emotions to curdle. I can assure you that when that nice young Mr. Ammidown appears you will find him quite a charming person."

Mrs. Dreans rolled a maraschino cherry about in the syrupy center of a cool grapefruit, ate it musingly and sighed.

The butler raised his eyebrows and served the omelette.

"Please don't think, mother, that just because you and Mrs. Ammidown were chums years ago," Clover waved her slim ringed hand backward as if consigning her mother's earlier life to the archives of antiquity, "—just because of that I shall sit indoors and wait to be looked over by a supercilious prig who has preconceived notions of my pliability. I won't have any man hand picked for me!"

"He's coming a long way to see you, dear."

"I don't care if he is coming from China!"

"Boston has put its stamp of approval on him."

"Ah,—I suppose that means his forehead bulges and he talks an incomprehensible language. Mother, you are a perfect dear, but as a modern parent you are quite distressing—quite—isn't she, Toy?" Clover finished airily.

Clover leaned over the table and pulled a merry faced calendula from a slender silver vase. The gold from its gay heart leaped to meet the tender blue in her brooding eyes. Clover looked at the luncheon table approvingly. With one half of her heart she loved the crisp linen with its tiny edge of lemon,

the quaintly shaped dishes rich in orange and opalescent lustres, and all the perfect appointments of her mother's menage. With the other half she loved her spasmodic work in the slums to which she went with an abundant store of good cheer, high spirits and health whenever life began to wear because of its softness—and from which she came away utterly weary, soul sick and disheartened to recuperate amid luxury till such time as she might return again fully equipped to carry on the self enforced burden.

Clover's mother was utterly horrified every time she was called upon to relinquish her beautiful dainty daughter to "those smelly, messy poor." She was perfectly content with her cars, her servants, her sun rooms, ball room, and chaise longue, but hers was the complacency of middle life, and she had long since forgotten the urge of hot young blood, if she had ever really known it except as a passing stranger whom one saluted hurriedly in early youth and promptly left to his own devices.

Clover and Toy had soon become immensely fond of each other. They found a

common bond in their tendencies for expression along unbeaten paths. They had long talks and had progressed to that enviable state of chumminess in which silence exists gracefully. Swinging among silken cushions in the lights and shadows of moonlit hours Toy had learned that Clover was not at all anxious to marry. Her days were so filled with vigorous interests that the shadow of a man trailed only faintly across her widening horizon. Toy, of course, had told Clover all about Jerry; all about their love for each other; all about Jerry's failure to fulfill the bargain at the crucial moment.

"I believe he was right, Toy!"

"Oh, Clover!"

"Yes, I do, dear. I have seen the utter misery that poverty brings and so often, so often, it hurts love. Keep that as you have had it. Remember Jerry as he laughed and sang and rambled among the hills. I know how charming and delightful he is. Time will, somehow, work out the problem for you."

At such a philosophy, when it concerned her affair with Jerry, Toy looked solemn and

showed no sign of assent. Jerry had hurt her and wounded her more than she knew herself. He had reared a glistening plant with careful tender hands and then shattered it at a blow.

Mrs. Dreans smiled at the two girls and said to Clover, entreatingly:

"Please go, dearie, and put on your new cherry gown and be ready to receive Mr. Ammidown."

Against the frosty fall of the silver edged hangings in the low doorway Clover's face shone with singular clarity. Mentally Mrs. Dreans draped her daughter with chiffon and furs; pearls and soft laces. She determined to be indefatigable in her endeavors for the dear girl's worldly success. She thought of Vale Ammidown and a warm feeling of pleasurable anticipation brought a flush to her well massaged cheek. There was a match, indeed! Wealth on both sides, family connections of much worth—every desirable thing.

Clover caught the look on her mother's face and read it easily and with a quick forgiveness of its triteness because she so well understood it was fostered by love, she threw her

arms about her mother's shoulders and cried:

"You know I was only teasing, mumsie dear. Of course I'll be glad to see Vale Ammidown just because you loved his mother and are interested in her son."

The two girls danced out of the room together arm in arm humming a new song.

Mrs. Dreans discussed a particular kind of oolong tea with the butler . . . . young Mrs. Goddwyn had served it on the occasion of the visit of an East Indian celebrity . . . . the fragrance of it was most alluring as it was carried in . . . . she understood Lotus flower blossoms were laid on the tea as it was drying . . . . marvelous the aesthetic trend of things these days . . . . eating always a vulgar process . . . . so charming to have one's mind distracted in these pretty ways. The butler was to serve tea and muffins to the young ladies and Mr. Ammidown in the conservatory at four.

Mrs. Dreans smiled upon the butler with patient condescension. It was only right that one should enlighten these poor dull beings, now and then, with some bit of sentiment their souls could digest. The fragment of knowl-

edge about the Lotus blossoms would probably occur to him every time he served tea thereafter and might lift him from a prosaic round of duty into realms of pleasant speculation.

Deftly the butler drew back Mrs. Dreans' chair; deferentially he handed her silk bag and her novel to her. It was a good thing the poor lady had some one to load her notions on! As for tea! My word!—he knew all about it—his sister had married a clerk in a tea merchant's establishment and it was safe to say he had drunk more kinds of fine tea—samples to be sure—than this family had ever heard of!

Mrs. Dreans left the room gazing with pleased abstraction at the mural decorations that a high priced artist had carried out in pastels.

She felt happy, as who shouldn't after a lavish luncheon ably assisted by a good digestion; a beautiful daughter budding into marriageable age, with an extremely satisfactory suitor hovering near.

The butler saw her out of the door, his face expressing bland good humor. He got the

dishes out precipitately. The searching and aromatic aroma of finnan haddie, undergoing preparation in some remote region for his especial delectation, had reached his inner being as the fumes of gasoline reach a rapacious match.

In her dainty boudoir Toy slipped from her negligee and attired herself in a white serge suit, black satin turning back from the wrists and throat accentuating the pale loveliness of her skin. Musingly she turned over the contents of her gold jewel case. She poked a large sapphire brooch aside disclosing a bracelet solidly set with square cut amethysts. The faintly teasing perfume of newly burst blossoms floated in through the half open balcony window and assailed her sensitive distended nostrils.

Clover's voice reached her from the adjoining room:

"I have some report cards to look over for one of my classes so if you would like to go for a walk, or a drive, Toy dear, please don't wait for me—why don't you take Jimpson and the town car and go for a turn in the park? You might have an adventure!"

Adventure! Toy crossed to a window her footsteps muffled in a thick rose and blue rug. She hung recklessly out over the sill disregarding the impropriety of so unmannerly but so human a performance.

"I believe I will go out for a bit, Clover, and if I'm not back in time for tea I'll see Mr. Ammidown at dinner—he is to stay, isn't he?"

"Yes, indeed. Mother asked him for the week-end."

Toy had put on her prettiest new hat. It was large and droopy and a garland of pink roses and blue cornflowers was twisted bewitchingly around the white brim. She looked out from its shadows, dimpling, as she caught the faint monotonous murmur of Mrs. Dreans' voice as that lady detailed bits of directions to her maid concerning a new coiffure. In the library she called the garage and ordered Jimpson to appear at the east doorway.

Toy drove toward the heart of the city instead of into the park. She reflected on the various tales she had heard of Chicago's boisterousness, and grimaced to think how lit-

tle one could see of it through the polished plate glass windows of a fastidiously appointed car.

People . . . . people seething about . . . . all hoping . . . . living . . . . loving . . . . stealing . . . . giving . . . . gaining . . . . sinning . . . . . all buttoning their various emotions behind sober vests and coats and summer blouses

On a quiet side street, not far from the intersection of a busy thoroughfare, Toy raised the black cord at her side and called through the mouthpiece to the chauffeur. He stopped the car at her order. Toy alighted and shut the door with a decisive snap.

"You may go, Jimpson."

"Where shall I wait, Miss?"

"You need not wait."

"This is somewhat an unpleasant part of the city for one on foot, Miss Toy. I can draw up on the other side—"

"No really," Toy reiterated, "you needn't wait, Jimpson. I'd like to walk about for a while—I can take a cab back."

"Very good. Thank you, Miss."

A brisk walk, a turn, and Toy was plunged

into that swirling varied mass of humanity that pours through throbbing arteries of long avenues to the city's heart. There mingled the politician, the ascetic, the professor, the clerk, the gambler, the student; there, her feet lightly and firmly treading the earth, tripped the dancer of the hour, and following her with heavy gait drooped a tired laundress. People from every quarter of the globe swung gayly, recklessly, smilingly, wearily, hopefully, scoffingly on together. At intervals, one or another walking apart at the thin edge of the crowd dreamed dreams, threading a peaceful way through the hurrying droves of business men that spread, a gesticulating mass through the center of the current . . . . shooting up through it all danced the slim younger generation with their eager bird-like voices and lighted eyes.

Caught in this onward march Toy moved swiftly along the avenues.

With not an appointment nor a duty in the world she had the afternoon to enjoy in just any way she chose. The attractively curtained window of a Russian tea shop caught her inquiring gaze. She had heard it spoken

71492A

of as a bohemian sort of place and it became her whim to see what attractions it offered.

While she sipped a delightfully aromatic tea from an egg shell cup she challenged silently . . . . "Come on, Adventure, I'm waiting!"

"This will do very nicely," a smooth deep voice reached her from an adjoining table.

An obsequious waiter withdrew. A chair was drawn with a faint drubbing sound across the blue tiled floor, and a tall immaculately attired person sat down. He laid his hat and gloves on another chair and balanced his cane carefully across.

He looked at Toy. Everyone always looked at Toy.

Toy dimpled over her cup of tea and jabbed at a floating slice of lemon. . . . . Dear me, Adventure fills one's commissions quickly!

As she cut skillfully into a foamy cream tart she reflected that most girls were introduced in a correct manner to those masculine persons they desired to know. They had knowledge before hand of their clubs, their

skill at golf, their projects and their ancestors.

Here was a person—undoubtedly attractive—of whom she knew nothing. He might be a highly successful smuggler or a millionaire, a composer or the owner of woolen mills. Perhaps he was as interesting to talk to as he was to look at—she could find out if she pleased—or not. She could sit demurely three feet from him for twenty minutes while he regaled himself on toasted English muffins and jam, and then saunter forth into the crowded street and never see him again, or she could smile at him and venture down a bewildering path to the land of romance.

Strange that just a smile could bomb down long walls of convention. Toy was well aware that it could do that. Of course, it wasn't precisely modest, but—well—it was giving trial to the modern idea that men should not always do the seeking, that, in fact, women might have a discriminating eye as well . . . . that it was in their province to choose and select friends who seemed interesting. Of course, on the other hand, it was risky, but all adventures journeying to un-

known shores, such as Columbus and Cook for instance, had risked much for a point at issue.

Toy smiled.

The man at the adjoining table looked studiedly at the bewitching little countenance turned full upon him. Then he arose.

"It's awfully good of you, I'm sure. May I bring my cup over?"

"Do!" coaxed Toy.

"How does it happen that one so charming is unaccompanied?"

"I'll tell you. I ran away this afternoon to escape a horrid wise man from the east."

The immaculate one raised his eyebrows.

"And I came in here just to find you!" Toy finished saucily.

"Indeed! How did you know I was coming?"

"Well, to tell the truth I didn't know just how you would look till you came. I didn't know you would have a commanding presence, and that your eyes would be mischievous, and that you would wear pearl gray gloves and carry a stick—"

"Well, I declare!"

"You see," continued Toy in her sweet voice that thrilled with staccato notes, "you represent Adventure. A few moments ago I asked a surprise of life—something new—something different—and you are that something!"

"Delicious!" murmured the man tasting his tea, but looking directly at Toy.

"We haven't the tiniest clue to each other's identities," Toy teased.

"So we haven't," mused the man. "Well, since you are so alive to adventure and since, I take it, this is your initial trip into that glorious realm—for the older adventurers are not so naive—allow me to offer my services as cicerone to the beguiling land of the unknown."

"Accepted."

"I have something to offer by way of diversion that might prove pleasurable. I have a friend whose wife is rather keen on antiquities. Porcelain—rare translucent pieces; quaint old china; tinted glass of remote periods; jade; Ming—are you fond of Ming?"

"Indeed, yes. I love all beautiful things—

colors are fascinating. There is no sight in the world that clutches my heart as a rainbow in the sky. All these colors man collects are just bits of that, aren't they?"

"What a dreamy little fairy you are. You are not like other girls, are you?"

"You may ask questions to determine!"

"No sage ever imparted wisdom to a more willing pupil."

Jerry! What would he think of her? He didn't want her . . . . that much was plain . . . . he had said so . . . . he had sent her away . . . . he wouldn't have her . . . . he wouldn't have her even after she had said she would be glad to sit in his chintz chair and mend and darn . . . . she had begged him to take her home with him and he wouldn't . . . . wouldn't . . . . wouldn't . . . .

The tea all gone, the cream tarts demolished, the gray gloves and stick gathered from the chair, and the bill paid, Toy and the representative of Adventure, wandered out into the soft air. It caught them like an invisible fairy web, dashing color into their faces, and wreathing around and about it showered them with half vague and wholly delightful

emotions. They walked on and on, talking, laughing, exchanging quips and witticisms that presently forged a spirit of happy friendliness between them. In a fashionable residential quarter, before a mammoth apartment building, "Mr. Adventure" as Toy called him, looked up.

"Here we are! See those windows way, way up? There is the perch of my friends. Shall we go up?"

"It would be delightful, I'm sure."

They ascended in a blue satin lined elevator. A trim Japanese answered their ring at the door of the apartment. He ushered them in. In the sumptuously fitted drawing room a solemn silence brooded—the silence of infrequent tenancy, the dimness of summer flittings.

The Japanese spoke in a low tone to Toy's escort.

"Oh, indeed! How very too bad!" exclaimed Toy's companion turning to her with a perturbed air:

"So very, very much chagrined to find my friends away. I have been a guest here on so many occasions that Hakon allowed us to

enter before announcing their absence. But, now that we are here, although the situation is not quite all that we would have it, let us put it down to fate's vagary and look at some of the porcelains. Shall we?"

They had an interesting time over cabinets and velvet lined cases until dusk descended on them and Hakon reappeared to illumine the room.

"O, dearie me! It's almost dinner time and Mrs. Dreans insists on punctuality."

"Mrs. Dreans! Mrs. Armand Dreans?"

Toy nodded bewilderedly.

"Then you must be Miss Toy Ashworth who is visiting my charming little friend, Clover!"

"Exactly—but who are you?"

"Oh, nobody much but that horrid wise man you told me you were running away from early this afternoon!"

"Oh—are you Vale Ammidown?"

"At your service."

"And you've missed tea with Clover!"

"Let me whisper that in your presence I have missed nothing—but I have been rude and forgetful—no doubt of that. Shall we

hurry on now in order to be in time for dinner?"

"Please. It would never do to miss that too."

Vale Ammidown and Toy presented themselves before an astonished lady and her daughter. Clover hailed the affair as:

"Delightful!"

Mrs. Dreans looked aghast, scandalized, incredulous and pinkly upset.

"But, dear lady, does it matter whether I met her at four o'clock in the afternoon over a cup of tea in your conservatory, or at three somewhere else? All that does matter is that we have met!" triumphed Vale.

Vale's infatuation was so patent, he was so overflowingly jubilant about the whole affair that poor amiable Mrs. Dreans was, sighingly, forced to put her own hopes and plans for Clover into the background and clear the path for the natural development of the affair between Toy and Vale.

Any affair with which Vale was concerned developed with a rush. Instead of paying a mere visit in the city as he had intended, he settled himself down at one of the clubs,

bought a highly colored car, opened accounts at three florists and devoted almost his entire time to laying siege to Toy.

Toy, it soon became evident, was not an impregnable fortress. There was one gateway open; one avenue of advance laid by the fumbling hands of Jerry. Jerry had refused to marry her! The weight of his decision became more intolerable as the days advanced.

Refused! In so doing he had left the way open for some other man. Every day Toy hoped for a letter calling her back to Jerry's lodgings, but it never came. Every day Vale Ammidown brought fresh evidences of his absorbing passion. Jerry's letters, though filled with endearing terms and cheerful encouragement, were silent on the problem of Toy's future. Toy wondered if, perhaps, now that she was away Cousin Henrietta would go back to her western town, but Cousin Henrietta had sent her wiry roots too deep into Ashworth's household to loosen them without direct command from him.

So the matter resolved itself into just this: Toy could not visit Clover indefinitely, neither could she go home to Cousin Henri-

etta, and Jerry wouldn't have her so there was only Vale Ammidown left. She liked Vale, but she loved Jerry.

Vale won her.

CHAPTER VIII

JERRY had been kept unusually busy at the Chronicle office ever since the morning he had taken Toy to the train that carried her off to Chicago to visit Clover. The fourth week end had come and gone without his promised visit to Toy. He was working with all his might and quenching his rebellion at the extra hours forced on him because he had great hopes through them for advancement and its consequent raise in salary.

He lived more and more frugally so that he might put aside a larger sum each week toward the final day when he had enough to safely send for Toy and not feel haunting fears and qualms for the future.

But before the fifth week came around Jerry's last letter to Toy had brought an astounding reply.

He staggered under its message. He was struck dumb with amazement. He read it over and over as he held the thin sheet of

paper in cold fingers following its lines with blurring eyes:

> *Jerry, dear:*
>
> This is a very hard letter for me to write to you. I might write dozens of preliminary words trying to soften the news I am sending you, but I'll just come straight to the point instead.
>
> I've never learned anything useful at which I can earn a living—I can't go home while Cousin Henrietta remains there—and you won't have me! So—I'm going to marry a man I've met here—Vale Ammidown. He is very nice—he is beside that, rich, and Mrs. Dreans knows all about his family.
>
> Please don't be too sad, Jerry boy.
>
> Your regretful,
>
> Toy.

After the shock of Toy's letter Jerry somehow struggled home to his solemn diggings letting himself in through the familiar streaked door with the fumbling awkward movements that hamper a drunkard's progress.

His soft rakish hat crushed down over his brows and his coat crumpled uncomfortably in wads between his back and the thin worn

upholstery of his lounging chair he sat motionless for hours and stared straight ahead. His whole ardent vivid nature was chilled into a state verging on insensibility. He sat on and on with the stoicism and pallor of death; there seemed a complete cessation of every force in his being.

Darkness swept through the streets; day sounds ceased and their blustering blunt officiousness gave place to the sharp quick sounds of night; the rush of a theatre bound cab; a door crisply opened that emitted the gay laughter of departing guests; then its sharp shutting followed by thick silence; rapid footsteps passing hurriedly up the street; footsteps scurrying down; a woman whistling a dog home to sleep; a shirt sleeved man placing milk bottles clatteringly at the sill; silence again; blocks and chunks and layers of silence.

But Jerold Wentry heard none of these things; nor did he contemplate the silence and its frequent jagged interruptions; he simply sat on and on. Presently, as some stricken animal might move about on a bed of leaves and look with a dull sickly air at familiar

sights, Jerry's gaze wandered to his pictures on the walls; how queer they looked; dull meaningless scenes; he wondered how he had flown into ecstasies over their tints at the time of purchase; now there was neither color nor life in their insipid lines; the wall paper pressed in upon him like a horrible smothering oriental fabric in which he had become inextricably wound and wrapped; he was fate's jack-in-the-box stuffed into this square hideous room; his books, lately beloved, seemed shallow useless things; he had glowed and responded to their messages, but what piffle it all was after all; what utter nonsense to stuff one's head with axioms; with rules of conduct; what folly to run madly after life and throw flowers and caresses into the whirling days and then have life fling one flat, blot out the sun.

Jerry's keen aesthetic face developed a quality of fright. He had been a rich potentate in the wonderful province of love and now suddenly found himself bankrupt and shivering outside the fast locked gates. His eyes dilated and continued to wander till they came round to his knees. Slowly his hand

moved forward and felt the fabric of his clothes; they seemed a ridiculous cut; how had he ever mustered the courage to go abroad in this particular pattern of cross bars that ranged back and forth over his long form.

He sat upright; queer tremors and shivers ran along his spine; his overwrought nerves, that were turning his familiar rooms into strange torture chambers, seethed afresh. For months he had been moving forward; struggling; hoping; building toward a home; toward marriage; toward his loved one. Now he was one of that fearful mob of foot loose wanderers; no woman in all the world to care; what would become of his affection; his hope; how did other men survive this sickening nausea of despair? Many of those poor bedraggled creatures whose crimes had eddied and poured around his desk day after day had once been as full of joy and life as he. He shivered and his long shapely fingers dug into the flesh of his palms.

He rose from his chair and flung his long arms skyward.

So—here was life! Not as he wished it could be, or thought it ought to be, but as it

actually was! Jerry's eyes were looking deep; deeper than it should be given to the young, the kind, the gentle to look. With love gone the whole pattern of life was torn and nothing else could decently cover the frailties of humanity; fame's garment was stiff; wealth's garment was bedizened; wisdom's garment froze with icy aloofness; only love's garment was eternally grateful; warm; comforting; clinging; sweet with the breath of hope and the world's budding joys.

For hours he sat on, cramped and dull and stiff, thinking mad thoughts that alternated with hot fierce flashes of clear sightedness. He would never again be the old carefree Jerry, his inky locks tossed happily back from his deep, merry eyes. He would never again hear the happy laughter that had lured him on from day to day and pealed in his dreams through long summer nights and waked him with the joy of living each wonderful morning . . . . all that was gone now . . . . there was just the ugliness of the world left, and its empty paths . . . . there was no use . . . . no use . . . . but he would hang around a bit longer . . . . perhaps she might need him

. . . . perhaps the horrible marriage wouldn't go through for some reason . . . . perhaps at the last moment she might come to him and say it was all a mistake . . . . here was the sun coming through the striped muslin curtains . . . . he had been sitting there the whole night . . . . what a fool he was . . . . he'd get to a telephone and call Toy and talk to her . . . . she would listen . . . . he would tell her he had been wrong when he insisted that they wait . . . . he would marry her to-day . . . . really, the sun was no end entrancing as it came through the muslin curtains and with a plant or two and her cheery smile the old place would be quite tropic and comfy and all that . . . . he could pound away on some extra work at night while she sat under the green shade and read . . . . he laughed aloud and lurched from his chair . . . . there was a dark growth on his lean jaw . . . . his eyes were red and wild, but he stumbled hurriedly down the stairs and sought out the telephone in the dark musty closet under the stair.

It was frightfully early but the Dreans' butler would be about,—he was a good old

boy . . . . probably had affairs of his own . . . . he would understand . . . . just a whispered word to Toy so that she might step out and telephone to him in her dear little voice.

He called for the Dreans number:

"Is that you, Jarvis? Jerold Wentry speaking. Say, old man, will you see Miss Toy as soon as she's awake and ask her to let me hear from her right after breakfast—what? Yes, at my rooms—I'll wait here—thank you—great distress, you know, or I wouldn't call so early—thanks, thanks, awfully good of you—"

He babbled on only stopping when a metallic click warned him his listener had gone. Then he climbed the stairs again and sat huddled in the same chair staring out of the same window . . . . waiting . . . . waiting. What an unmitigated chump he had been! When she had offered to come to him—to share that very room with its shabby furniture—to sit in this very chair—to look through these smoky panes of glass—and he had refused! Refused! What an assinine thing to do! Why hadn't he known that he was wounding and

bruising that beautiful child? Why? Because he was a thick skinned fool! But he had learned his lesson now . . . . he had learned his lesson!

The telephone bell rang. He flung his door wide and plunged down the dark stair. Mrs. Reel was ahead of him and he saw her meagre bedraggled form disappear into the close dark cave with a slithery motion. The faded torn tassel of her bath robe hung back as if in readiness to beckon him, then, it, too, slunk silently through the door and Mrs. Reel's voice floated up on the sharp morning air:

"Well, well, dearie,—I certainly am glad you called for I want to ask you about that recipe for goulash—do you put salt pork and—"

"Lord!" groaned Jerry as he went back to his room. At intervals the bell pealed and each time its whirring ring sounded through the halls and up the stairway Jerry started like a man suddenly shot. But it was always some dreary message for some other member of the sleepy household. One after another they awoke to bathe with noisy splashings;

whiffs of too brown bacon floated greasily up; doors slammed; footsteps hurried away and finally the day had fairly begun and still he sat on. The sun had come around farther now and its rays fell in across his hands. He looked at them curiously. How warm they felt . . . . and how cold his heart was . . . . odd that anyone could go on living with one's heart so filled with ice.

In the afternoon Mrs. Reel shuffled upward to tidy his room. She started when the drawn weary apparition confronted her.

"Why, lad, I thought you had gone or I should have brought you this note that came an hour ago."

"Note!" shouted Jerry, "Note! Thank heaven for that. It's most awfully important, you know. You wouldn't mind waiting to do my room for a bit, would you?"

His hands trembling with expectancy Jerry closed the door after Mrs. Reel's retreating form. Life flooded back into his heart. Life, color and the fragrance of the world. He tore the pink scented envelope apart and read:

Dear One:

I shall never forget our love and I know you will not. We have the remembrance forever, haven't we? I shall be happy to think that your wonderful eyes are looking out on the same world with me. I shall be glad to think, when the stars are twinkling ever so high, that we loved them together, but I know now you were right. It is better to keep our love as it has been than to drag it through poverty and suffering.

If you had not painted the picture so clearly I should not have known, but I can see it all now. Always I shall love you, but love is not enough. One must have furs and gowns. It is custom. The world is cut to order on custom, but — always I shall — remember.

TOY.

Jerry folded the letter carefully and replaced it in its envelope. Then he tore it across and across taking each severed bit to tear that again into other bits. He walked about his room half a dozen times stopping to look carefully at one or two of his pictures. Then he took them all off of the walls and piled them on top of each other. He scrawled

"Salvation Army" on a sheet of paper from his scratch pad and stuck it into the frame of the uppermost picture with a bent pin. He dragged his trunk from the recess behind his bed and feverishly pitched his scanty wardrobe into its maw. His books he looked at with tired eyes and left to the dust and their fate.

After strapping his trunk he pulled some money from his pocket and sought out Mrs. Reel. He thrust it all into her bashful hand though it paid twice what he owed. To her questioning look he said huskily:

"Good bye."

"Are you sick, lad?"

"No, no—I'm all right—that is, will be—presently."

Going to the bank Jerry withdrew his nest egg, that carefully hoarded lump that had been too damnably small—it was big enough now for his purpose.

* * * * *

The shabby street saw Jerold Wentry no more, but that made no great difference to the street; it made no difference at all; the shirt sleeved man put out the milk bottles at ten

as before; the woman whistled in her dog; late callers came and went; taxis bumped the curbs; Jerry's desk at the Chronicle saw him no more, but that made no great difference to the desk; it made no difference at all; another eager uncollared chap sat behind it; the city saw no more of Jerry, but that made no great difference to the city; it made no difference at all; its offices and shops and streets and street cars were filled with men his size; the country saw no more of Jerry, but that made no great difference to the country; it made no difference at all; its hills and valleys, its plains and towns were full of spirited youths.

At the hour of Toy's wedding Jerry stood at a great ship's rail following the swirl of outward flung foam. Knots and groups of passengers watched the receding shore, but Jerry never once looked back. With a dull anguish that was turning him bitter he gazed ahead to an unknown shore where he hoped dim clouds washing a benign moon might restore a part of his lost peace.

For days and days the boat sped on. Jerry spoke to no one other than an occasional

steward; he did not read, nor smoke; he ate little, and slept less; he skirted the gayety of the salon; he was almost rude to blustering card playing persons who insisted that he take a hand; nothing stirred nor reached nor interested him except the thought of getting forever away from the place where he had been —that and the ringing, singing voice of the water that so seldom fails in offering intercession to its devotees.

CHAPTER IX

TOY did not return to her father's house to be married. She did return to that quiet little city in which her childhood had been spent. She and Vale were married in church driving there directly from the train and driving away again immediately after the ceremony.

If Cousin Henrietta's wizened face looked out from the obscurity of some ribbon laden pew Toy did not see it. All she did see and remember, as she advanced toward the broad steps before the altar, was Clover's warm friendly smile and Mrs. Dreans' genial countenance wreathed in complacency. Toy's mind was a blur through which she was dimly conscious of a sea of eager faces; the usual faces at a wedding that are hung above the ribbons and greens in wide expectancy; faces from which every other motion seems obliterated till the service is over when they fall back into the familiar lines of those myriad

stresses that make the trembling network of human living.

Mr. Wickham, the clergyman, had said to someone:

"Nice fellow, Vale Ammidown."

What he meant to convey was,—nice fortune; good family and all that! Had he lifted the curtain on Vale's indiscretions he might have retired with a small horrified cry, but it is not a clergyman's province, seemingly, to raise curtains. Merely his province to read words having to do with a joining in heaven that were often more suitably catalogued in another region not so comfortable of contemplation.

On the night of his wedding Vale Ammidown stood forth amid heavenly roses his habitual fickleness well disguised as he towered genially over sweet valley lilies that breathed their gentle hopefulness from gold crosses and ribbon decked arches.

The moment directly after Toy became Vale's wife was a black one to her. It was all so far from what she wanted to do. Jerry should never have let it happen. She wanted to turn and call past Vale's shoulder; past the

flowers; past the eager faces; past the white gloved ushers; past the heavy doors; past whatever lay in between—and reach the one ear in the world for which her love was intended.

Over the crisp silks, gaily trimmed hats; from the purple discs in lofty stained windows; from the dull soft browns of old carvings; from the thick red carpet; from the exuberant song of the organ that burst upward among the tallest arches; there came curling forward across the bewildered senses of the little bride—a fog. A fog of doubt and dull despair; a paralysing, blinding thing like those dense fogs in which people grope about familiar streets that in a moment of lowering weather have turned utterly strange. In the center of the fog that was draining the rose from her cheeks and lips Toy came upon a steadying rock. It was the curious thought that this was only a phase through which she was passing; that she must somehow get through and beyond for ahead fairer things might lie in wait in fresh fields.

A long silent voice breathed a message to her. It was the voice of the old clergyman of

her childhood. Through the gathering fog she saw the radiance of his smile. He had once said:

"My child, count yesterday as experience; to-day as opportunity; and to-morrow as a sealed letter from God."

So with this invisible letter in her hand Toy left the church.

The stifling moment of dread and foreboding was over—broken by Vale's hearty direction to the chauffeur; by swiftly turned corners; by merry ejaculations; by the crowded station; by turning wheels; by an unfolding journey; by the thousand swift adjustments of a maid to the life of a man.

After the departure of the bridal party the last guests burst from the church in a warm flurry of sweet scented air and yellow light. The stragglers and watchers on the outside disengaged themselves from various positions of advantage on railings and in arches and crannies and sauntered off down the street. Flowers were gathered up and portioned out here and there; others were left to droop on their stems; one by one the lights were extinguished and in the darkness a marvelous

filmy fabric—a rich mantel of abandoned dreams was spread in the silent church.

People had sat there; eager and old; young and glad; sad and expectant; they had all woven threads of hope to the tones of the majestic organ; and the threads were spread now in an invisible cobwebby net from window to arch; from chancel to pew; from floor to ceiling.

Dreams—who has not dreamed them! Flowers—who has not loved them! Weddings—who has not cried and smiled at them!

Amidst the rustlings and whisperings; the comments and noddings; the garlands of flowers had not shouted aloud, but there had been in that place no soul so weary that it had not caught the silent message of the fragrant petals and dreamed above them.

And behind these little dreams, its sweetness distilled into the hearts of flowers through long centuries, drifted the great dream of the universe. . . . .

* * * * *

It was Jerry's voice Toy heard all night in the trees. She thought it was Jerry's arm that

cradled her as she slept fitfully. She felt Jerry's light phanton kiss flitting across her eyes, her hair, her lips—as she woke at dawn. . . . .

Jerry!

Suddenly the deceitful mantle of gayety woven by recent feverish days and the activities of preparation, fell away and Toy was Jerry's sweetheart again. She threw the covers from her bed and sprang into the center of the flamboyant hotel room.

Vale, muscular arms flung over his head, a long lock of hair thrown back from his broad moist brow, was somehow distasteful to her. She felt terribly alone; afraid. She ran to a window and looked out at the purpling east as she and Jerry had looked one other morning from a little hotel room.

"Jerry! Jerry!" she suddenly cried and the piteousness of her voice echoed through the silent room. Her husband stirred and muttered gutturally in his sleep.

Far, far away—with oceans and mountains, valleys and plains in between—Jerry, looking at thin clouds streaking a widening sky, heard her and answered:

"Toy . . . . my little lost love!"

Vale Ammidown and his bride swept into an ornate Boulevard Cafe to have a belated breakfast the day following their marriage. That is, Vale swept in and Toy followed. They sat down in a conspicuous position. Toy looked about bewilderedly. Her hands were cold and her lips were dry. A dull pain stabbed into the tired region above her left eye. Vale with a careless:

"By your leave," opened his letters and became absorbed in them.

Toy looked about at the occupants of surrounding tables. Some of them were sitting in window embrasures; eating; lolling; staring; bent over clasped hands; slouching forward over omelet; leaning back from chilled, demolished fruits; there were women bold in silks; alluring in satins; retiring in wools; some of them were twisted into Apache attitudes; some were brilliantly made up; some looked sere and crackly; one woman in crimson cock feathers ogled a man across the top of a morning paper; a man openly brow beat a woman in a soft oily tone that emanated from a hard heart. A mid-western female impresario, coarse voice, stringy hair, who

had jaunted eighty miles away from her usual habitat, dined luxuriously this particular morning on pyramids of colored foods dipping deep into the fat pocketbook of a lean tenor who had an eye to probable contracts; a young person in a peachblow waist sat across from her lover eating grape fruit nervously after a first night in a hotel bedroom registered as his wife which she was not —and never would be now. One cheek was rouged closer to her thin nose than the other and her eyes were dull. She dropped bits of sugared bun and glanced at her escort furtively to see if he noticed her agitation. He did not. He was stuffing his bounding carcass with griddle cakes and country sausage and pouring strong coffee down to fill up the chinks. The bloom was off this particular peach and already he spied another delectable bud seated a few paces off . . . . black hair . . . . round gipsy eyes . . . . regular beauty . . . . Oh! Boy!

An old gentleman, spare, white bearded, a carnation in a well pressed button hole constantly forgot the time and constantly asked an affable colored waiter to enlighten him on

that interesting subject. The waiter replied clearly and cordially to each request:

"Just 11:10, sir; or 11:40, sir; or 12:20 now, sir."

In an aside to the head servitor he whispered:

"That's eight times he's asked me the same question, but I reckon it cheers him up to speak to somebody—it don't take a mighty lot of trying to make old folks happy."

In a far corner sat another old gentleman . . . . flabby . . . . colorless . . . . digging a diabetic's grave with English muffins and honey and four lumps of sugar in his coffee. A voluble lady conducted a one-sided conversation with a jaded steward that had to do with greens she had seen in the markets that could not be traced to the bill of fare. Behind her sat an Englishman, loud voiced and imperiously impressive. A sinewy Japanese gentleman bent himself double over a slippery hors d'eouvre intent on some mysterious mission in the interest of his far country that was fulminating in the back of his agile brain. A tall girl, two tables away, in a soiled gold scalloped gown glared at him and tapped her

large feet that protruded into the aisle. Toy watched the fond touch of a plebian husband who threw his wife's summer fur across her shoulders and drew his fingers lovingly over its sleekness because he had paid for it with hard and thankfully earned dollars. Quite unlike the manner of the correct and bored looking gentleman who stood stiffly aside while black hands encircled his wife's ivory throat and divested her snugly corseted person of a flowing silk cape.

If one lost oneself in speculating on the complexities of merely so tiny a corner of the world as this one soon became deaf to even so insistent a thing as an impatient husband's voice:

"Asleep again, Toy? Order, do, like a good girlie—I'm almost famished. What'll it be? A bit of broiled mackerel and some corn muffins?"

"Yes, Vale, if you like—anything—it doesn't matter."

Vale ordered, crammed his letters into his pocket, emptied his goblet, called for more ice and looked at Toy.

"Can you amuse yourself in the shops for a

bit this afternoon? I want to see some old friends while we are here—business people, you know."

"Yes, indeed, Vale."

A chill crept over her. They weren't companions. They weren't going to be companions. They weren't lovers. They weren't going to be lovers. Too late for that now. Even an early twenty-four hours can etch the dread words "too late" on human hearts when one heart is very fresh and the other very stale.

They were married. That was all. First there had been Cousin Henrietta who couldn't understand her, and now there was Vale. She had a feeling of having been handed on from one dragon to another. She had taken Vale's name and he paid the bills. That's about all there was to it! With Jerry, how different it would have been. Low lights and sweet communings by an open window; his tender arms; his caressing voice; his merry laugh; his sympathy; his wonderful kiss . . . . a kiss that had been quickly warm, born of centuries of mingled lovers . . . . now white and still . . . . and gone . . . . gone on the winds

that blew through black tree tops . . . . over stark mountains, into far hills where it was lost forever . . . . Toy dabbed hurriedly at a tear that rolled down her cheek.

"What's the matter?" queried Vale. "Catch cold last night? Should think you would. Why on earth don't you women wear something sensible to bed? Suppose we men retired in a quarter of a yard of lace over our chests—who would be left to run things I wonder!"

"It's the style and it's comfortable," ventured Toy.

"Well, pneumonia isn't comfortable—ever try that?"

"No, I'm usually rather well. These muffins are very good, Vale."

Toy and Vale spent many of their evenings at the theatres. Vale sat heavily through the intermissions, scowling and chafing at the restraint imposed upon his capacious thirst by what he designated as the "eighteenth abandonment."

Toy, whose rapid-fire comments had always elicited clever sparkling retorts from Jerry, essayed witty speeches in vain. She won a

monosyllabic response or a half smile, now and then, from Vale, who had little sense of humor and whom everything seemed to bore most fearfully.

Their conversations at the theatres, between acts ran something after this manner:

Toy: "Most of the people who used to go out to drink now remain in to eat, don't they, Vale?"

Vale: "Really hadn't noticed, my dear. Maybe they do."

Toy: (Singling persons from the audience and fitting names to them to suit her own fancy.) "Look, Vale, there's Reginald De Klas who used to lift the noiseless rock and rye, but now chews rock candy, third row, center, with all the gusto of a vacuum-cleaner redding up a department store after a bargain day."

Vale: "Rather good, that!"

Toy: "Mr. De Puyster who was once wont to sip the slippery fizz, now may be seen glooming over gum drops in the left-hand box."

Vale: "You are making me thirstier than ever!"

Toy: "Bert Evards, the popular sports writer, has cornered twelve seats in a bunch due to the fact that he chews hard nut candy with his mouth open so that the play can't possibly be heard in his proximity."

Vale: "You don't tell me!"

Toy: "Bobbie Jones, his pockets stuffed with a cargo of lemon drops, cinnamon balls and molasses candy sounds like a cement crusher at work on an endless roadway. From where he is sitting Bobbie enjoys the performance tremendously but nobody else does."

Vale: "If you mean that little shrimp in the third row—there is nothing to prevent his going out to get a lemon soda—that's probably all he ever drank, anyhow."

Toy: "Cast your eye at old Mr. Boozelum. He has found familiar footing on the brass rail just behind the man with the bass viol. All during the first act he sounded like a hippopotamus choking over a peanut. With the fall of the first curtain he had swallowed his twentieth chocolate drop."

Vale: "I sympathize with him."

Toy: "Nell de Mell used to pour them down at the club, but now while watching the

leading man spurn his faithless sweetheart, she muses over an all-day sucker snatched from her small brother. Note the discomfiture of her escort who doesn't know whether to take sick and go home or grin."

Vale: "Some imagination, haven't you, Toy?"

Toy: "Mr. Wimbleton, the professor of dead and buried languages, has taken to gum chewing which alluring pastime he has followed so persistently and violently as to effect his optic nerve. The spasmodic winking of his left eye, induced by this habit has attracted the pleased attention of a stout widow. She will shortly sue him for breach of promise."

Vale: "Poor fish!"

Toy: "It has been noticed that the jovial ticket seller has a penchant for cream kisses, while the ushers exchange opera caramels, fig paste and almond bars. Not having reached the leading lady's dressing room yet (I have been trying to dissolve and swallow an anise drop), I can't say what she eats there, but I do know that when the show is over and she has been banished from the country forever by an irate parent, she has been seen standing on

the corner under an arc light eating peanut brittle."

* * * * *

After jogging about the country for many weeks, checking their baggage from one fashionable hotel to another; climbing from taxis into trains and from trains into taxis; dashing up new avenues in new cities; going to bed in peach pink or apple green bedrooms; rising to scan more time tables and ask more questions; Toy and Vale finally turned toward Boston.

Toy was tired and sad. Vale was indifferent and bored, his ruddy body bent forward into an attitude that denoted he was already in search of the next adventure on life's roadway. He had expected so much of Toy in the way of thrill, but marry a girl and she immediately became tiresome and monotonous, or worse, was so deucedly clever that it made one feel flat just to listen to her. Well, anyway, married he was safe to wind a glittering way among all the fluttering bevies of girls in the world without bothering his head over possible outcomes. His outcome had come. He was a respectable married person. He might now have various kinds of flings with-

out perturbation. Viewed in this light marriage did serve a good purpose on the whole.

* * * * *

There are periods in the personal histories of some men and their wives that are better left obscure. There are some scenes upon which it is best to lower a kindly and obliterating curtain.

Curtains are mediums that divide the savage from the civilized; curtains veil age and illness from the curious street; they hide the intimacies of mother and babe; they preserve games of chance from the eye of the law; they shield young lovers from passing eyes; lowered in the faces of irate radicals they preserve peace; raised to the morning sun they let in hope; curtains keep the peoples of the world from flying at each other's throats.

One's neighbor need not assume an aggressive air nor shout nor belabor one because he thinks one is becoming too familiar with the little tricks and mannerisms and ways of living into which he falls in the gracious confines of his own domicile. He need fear no eye out side on the pavement. He need simply lower the curtain.

Behind the curtain someone has lowered to hide Toy, let us peek for there is a space of some six inches left free at the bottom. We'll wedge ourselves into a cranny beside a flowering lilac bush, and clinging to the rough stones under the window ledge, catch a glimpse of the room within as the light summer breeze balloons the weighted linen leaving wide openings on either side.

Years are passing behind the curtain . . . . slow . . . . dull . . . . dragging years full of pain and chagrin . . . . and utter hopelessness . . . . years during which Toy learns of her husband's corroding laziness of mind . . . . years during which the chill of his indifference creeps over her like a rising tide to hold her stranded on the barren rocks of sadness . . . . years in which her two children are born but to die . . . . years in which her distaste for Vale accumulates till in a fury of protest she flies from the heavily adorned drawing room to a bare dreary court to procure release.

We see her coming back after the granting of her divorce. As we scramble to keep our footing and the lilacs beat against our faces,

we understand the look with which Toy re-enters the room. It is the look of love and hope long baffled set free.

In her hand she clasps a magazine to which a new writer has contributed a remarkable article on travel in the wilds of central Africa. The name of the writer is Jerold Wentry. His printed words on the magazine page provide the first knowledge Toy has had of him for years.

She lays down her wraps and picks up the telephone. She reaches the editor of the magazine, and asks if he will be kind enough to disclose to a very old and very dear friend of Mr. Wentry's that gentleman's whereabouts:

"I want to reach him immediately—by wire—by cable—"

"Madam," the voice of the editor halts perceptibly, "madam, my grief is profound. It becomes my sad duty to inform you that the brilliant young man for whom you ask became the victim of a particularly deadly fever some three weeks ago and we have only to-day received word of his death. . . . . "

The curtain now! . . . . someone has shut

the window and the heavy linen no longer billows in the breeze . . . . we steel our hearts against the tears and anguish that hang heavily in the somber room . . . . we thrust aside the dainty beating fingers of the lilacs and rush away . . . . from the street we look back . . . . stillness . . . . and the curtains drawn clear to the bottom now.

This was the greatest shock delivered by the fleeting years and Toy fell under it. She had met life's burdens, one after the other, with eyes ahead, with muscles taut, with hope still green in her torn heart, for through all the terror of unlovely years she had steadily looked forward to the time when she and Jerry would find each other again and pick up the golden thread where they had so unwisely dropped it.

Now under Jerry's death she went down . . . . down . . . . down . . . . into the black abyss of mental exhaustion. She became alarmingly weak and the servants carried her to bed. When the hurriedly summoned physician arrived Toy whispered to him hoarsely:

"I seem to be stricken with some strange

malady. My tongue is thick, my head is hot. . . . ."

"Knees weak? Stomach cutting capers? Feel like a sick cat turned loose in a strange alley?" countered the doctor. "Know all the symptoms; been doing too much; you modern women never know when to stop."

"That's just the trouble, doctor, I have stopped; everything's stopped. Life has stopped! It doesn't matter now whether I live or die."

"Nonsense! You'll be laughing at yourself with me when this phase has passed."

The following week with bloodshot eyes and a whirling head Toy sat disconsolately looking from her window at the strange beings who were disporting themselves up and down the streets in high spirits. She envied the laundry man his pep. What an exhilarating life his must be! He bounded up and down steps with a superbly sprightly air, swinging bundles rakishly by the string, smiling at nurse maids, chatting with policemen, slapping the laundry horse on the back. On second thought she cut this last bit of playfulness from the list of enviable pleasures. In

her state she felt not the slightest yearning toward extending even an infinitesimal modicum of endearment on so gauzy and delicate a thing as a fly. Just to contemplate a good solid whang on the back of a staunch horse made her weak all over. It was hard to realize that just a few days before she had driven her motor; chatted with friends; hoped and suffered with her neighbors while now she was enveloped in this horrid lethargy.

Surrounded by bottles of spring water, atomizers, gauze, amber liquid for a cough, pearly white powders for pain, hot water bottles, ice bags, camphor and the unread morning paper she lay still unmindful of passing events; uncaring.

The doctor called and uttered an unwelcome sentiment.

"You must have a nurse," said he.

At this point Toy should have screamed,

"No!" thrown a pill box at the doctor or succumbed to the disease that already had its talons in her nerve. Instead she piped meekly,

"Very well, doctor."

The first day after the nurse's arrival Toy

learned much about herself that somehow had escaped her all these years. She learned that her dilated pupils, which she had considered a distinct mark of beauty, were precursors of severe nervous breakdown; that the becoming wild rose flush in her cheeks, which had seemed so poetic, was in reality a dreadful thing called hectic, and it was the vanguard of a lot of other dreadful things all spelled out in the nurse's dictionary.

One of the pleasantest tunes in the world was the tune her old cook, Mary Ellen, sang when she fried doughnuts. The nurse with her solemn ghostly hushedness squelched the tune in Mary Ellen's throat. She went out and asked dear little Bobbie Jones not to shout as he ran down hill and sent little Elizabeth home because she laughed boisterously. She completely depopulated Toy's familiar world. She excluded the air, shut out the sun; she turned her friends away from the door and the telephone. She canned Toy up with her troubles and expected her to burst forth into health.

When, at last, Toy showed a sign of returning hope and spoke in faint terms of food the

nurse recited long tales of what this and that had done to the internal economy of former patients. For many a day thereafter, Toy could not view a porterhouse steak without feeling a gouty twinge and as for fruits and foods that were acid—well, there was a miscalculation when they were invented. They are no good for stomachs. If you don't believe it ask a nurse for half a grapefruit and then spend the remainder of the morning wondering what lucky chance has kept you alive after all the acidulous viands you have swallowed for years.

Weeks dragged by and despite Toy's keen sense of humor that always held a tiny light aloft in a dreary world; despite her valiant efforts to drive her tottering limbs into short excursions about the house she grew steadily worse until her grotesque frame of mind frightened her. She formed pallid and futile plans for saving herself.

Finally she changed physicians and was sent away to a breezy western country where she fought the demons of darkness and wandered in the mad tortures of shadowland. She was like a lamp from which the flame had

died. Deaf and blind to her surroundings she struggled through weary weeks huddled over the grave of self. She was afraid of life and afraid of death. She dared not contemplate either, but her wrecked body and mind hung in between the two while her tired limbs carried her up and down the low hills that encircled the little town to which she had fled.

These little hills were like the rim of a clean green bowl. In its hollow rested comfortable white cottages, riotous old fashioned gardens blazing in bands of color that spread from neatly raked back door steps down to a lazily running river. Wide reaching trees offered vistas of twilight coolness. Up and down the quiet friendly streets walked peace, that shy sweet angel who is hard of cultivation until one has met, first, his stormy browed brother, disaster.

Toy learned to look with equanimity on the death of Jerry so that it no longer tore at her heart, and at last, one marvelous day peace smiled into her eyes and went with her over the road to a clover scented hillside where blowing leaves fanned across her awakened

face, and the bells of the far off world set her soul afire. From the heart of the hill where purple gray mists curled as the sun dropped low Toy received into her own heart the exquisite gift of harmony.

Standing alone in the silent wood, violets pushing through the mold at her feet, her living fingers, steady and cool, wrote a message to her dead lover, and that hour brought her release. Through the ministering care of nature she had found adjustment; quiet months of out of door living had fitted her to assume again a place among striving peoples. Her period in the repair shop was over. She was well.

She tore a leaf from the small note book she carried on her rambles and wrote her message to Jerry on it. She called it "Possession" and she pinned it to the blowing bough of an oak. It read:

Men say that you are
Gone;
That death has led you on
To other scenes,
But at these empty words
I smile,

For you are with me more often
Now
Than you have ever been.
I bare my head upon the
Hill,
And your spirit laves my brow.
I know you live forever
In the breeze, in full throated
Birds, in moonlight, in the sky,
The air.
Men tell me you are gone. . . . .
I smile,
For you are very
Near.

Toy went back down the hill. She settled her account at the hospitable farm house that had been her home for a year and she started away to begin life afresh.

CHAPTER X

ON a soft spring day Toy stepped from a long train into Chicago, a part of that weaving crowd that is eternally buying tickets from here to there in the hope that the wizardry of curling smoke and puffing steam will efface all problems.

Her particular problem was the forgeting of dead loves and sad yesterdays; the facing of an empty to-day and uncertain tomorrows; the problem of living on when life was over; the problem of climbing steep barren banks from the depths; the problem of hunting with tired eyes and listless hands for little tender shoots of friendship that planted along the outstretched way might slowly blossom into an ascending network to hold her faltering upward step.

The usual jocular men, who travel blithely and loudly, were in evidence as the train slid under the vast dim shed.

"I say, potah, is the old wreck on time?"

"We made some over at Jim's house last

Sunday that can't be beat—clear as a bell, smooth as velvet—sure, I'll give you the recipe."

"Cleaned up a whale of an order—wired my firm—"

Toy enjoyed the odd bits of conversation and stray spurts of enthusiasm. The rhythmic racking and creaking of the long slackening train; the motley assortment of outthrown bags upon which red capped boys fell merrily; the shouted greetings and directions; the bumpings and begpardonings; the pleasant excited bustle of arrival brought a pleased pucker about her gray eyes.

She was a little regretful over the fact that her journey was done, and that, for a season, she must bid good bye to change, that greatest of all mental activators.

Grown weary of his surroundings, the millionaire changes over stuffed chairs, scented foyers, exclusive clubs, shining pavements, for beach chairs, strips of wind blown sand, palm shaded groves and remote islands lapped by highly colored waves.

The middle class person exchanges a round of tedious tasks, a commonplace household,

and codfish balls on Sunday morning for something new in the way of hard won enjoyment by getting aboard a train to visit a distant relative whose tasks are somewhat varied from her own; who serves codfish balls on Friday night instead of Sunday morning and who raises an entirely different variety of flowers in her back garden.

The person who dwells on the lowest rung of the human ladder is just as susceptible to moods as his brother and sister higher up. When the urge for fresh scenes assails the dweller in the alley, and the deadly surge of monotony engulfs his soul, a way is also open to him in which to jerk up his sagging mentality. In order to secure the reviving effect of change he moves his dwelling from one piano box to another. He finds the nails inside the new one differently placed, so that his cap may hang higher or lower; perhaps there are two loose boards instead of the old tiresome three, and his change from one alley to another may actually have secured a change in clime, for, whereas, he fronted north before, and endured the rigors consequent on such a situation he may now find himself pos-

sessed of a south exposure, the extreme advantage of which as a brightener of the disposition there is no arguing.

The house in the town of Toy's birth had long since been sold, and Brule Ashworth had closed his earthly accounts, as had Cousin Henrietta, leaving Toy utterly devoid of living relatives.

Clover and Mrs. Dreans were settled abroad, so Toy, now aged thirty-five, advanced on the roaring city without a single friendly hand to guide her across the roaring streets, without a single interested friend to help her settle those most desperate of all problems for a woman alone—how to live and where to live.

So Toy settled these problems for herself by taking a tiny furnished kitchenette apartment on Sheridan Road. She employed her first day there by unpacking her large wardrobe trunk and hanging and laying its contents neatly away in the white enameled wardrobe, and in the capacious chest of drawers, that ran half way to the ceiling of her well lighted dressing room; and by sorting the contents of her smaller trunk that con-

tained treasured bits of linen saved from her dismembered household store. A few of these she took from the trunk and put into the pretty little cabinet in the blue and white kitchen. She tacked a strip of blue silk behind the leaded panes of the cabinet to hide the silver knives and forks and spoons in even rows along the shelves. During the afternoon a buxom housekeeper came in, counted the silver, the hotel napkins, towels and scarves; withdrew, to send in various helpers with mops and pails who blackened the stove, polished the nickel, wiped the floors and who, like modern, ginghamed genii, flourished about with swift magic strokes and, in turn, vanished to leave the little dwelling shining and spotless. After her long year close to nature, in the rambling western farm house, this ultra modern fashion of living was amazing in its short cuts and substitutions. It was almost alarming to Toy, at first, to contemplate swinging her bed down from the back of a door in order to retire in her living room; to fold her dinner table against another door and to swing it out of view to disclose

in so doing a desk and book shelves nailed to the other side.

After the details of packing had been gone through to the last one, and the pleasantly satisfying wheels of domesticity had been set in motion, and the final touch of homeiness had been added to her rooms by the placing of four gayly blossoming plants on the broad window sills, Toy sat down to view the cosy little scene.

From her position on the deep soft divan she could see all of the living room, in which she sat, a corner of her dressing room and the tiled bath beyond, and she could catch, also, an abbreviated glimpse of the orderly and shining kitchen. It all looked very nice; modern; comfortable—though the comfort was stereotyped, and the brave make believe of the labor saving devices and the condensed arrangement of the rooms gave it all the appearance of a scene skillfully set for a play.

Her mind dwelt on these palpable facts through a quiet half hour while she relaxed and rested her pleasantly tired limbs. Then she worked around to another thought not quite so pleasant.

Apparently there was not a soul in the world who needed her.

Toy had enough money upon which to live simply so there was no direct cause for her to seek employment. There were no duties, cares or obligations to which it was necessary for her to attend, aside from the slight demands made on her time and energies by her simplified mode of housekeeping. Her days and nights were free, with the freedom of emptiness, which is perhaps, after all, but an aggravated form of bondage. This was a dangerous situation upon which to enter after recent deliverance from the shadow land of severe nervous disorder.

Toy spent her first evening in Chicago wrapped in a fluffy lavender robe curled in a chair under an amber reading lamp. She thought steadily for three long hours. A book lay across her knee untouched.

She was a beautiful woman, though hers was not the sort of beauty that would leap at passers in a crowd; not the kind of beauty that flamed and flared and flaunted itself; but a soft, gentle, compelling grace of eye and limb and mind. Her fragrant skin was as

smooth as a delicate mantel of cream warmed to rich tints by the coaxing sun of a summer afternoon; alone, in repose, loveliness woke in her wide musing eyes; sweetness touched the corners of her lips; her hair, the mellow brown of a polished filbert shell, swept thickly away in waves and twisting tendrils from the piquant seriousness of a face so mobile as to mirror each passing thought and to light with bewitching mischievousness on rare occasions. The indomitable humor in her soul fought constantly to keep her happily afloat gray days. It beat unceasingly against the stoniness of sorrow; against the flint like dullness of commonplaceness, whipping these things into a froth which her eyes penetrated, akindle.

She was peculiarly fine; exquisitely sensitive; unpretentiously just; and unfailingly keen; in the cool well of these mingled faculties her greatest beauty dwelt. A beauty ready to be drawn by some understanding soul who, like an eager wayfarer searching the heavens for starlight, might turn aside to a deep sunk spring to find quietly reflected there the glories that he sought.

At this time of her life Toy was odd.

There is no denying that, rather is that quality presented as a distinct asset.

Masterpieces are not painted in gross lots; genius does not flock about the streets in crowds, but exclusive and excluded, lonely, uncertain of certainties, it puzzles and sifts, agonizes and expands until the day of its blossoming.

To the casual observer this quiet charming woman, who had offered the hotel management convincing credentials, who had signed a lease and who had moved into one of the hundreds of tastefully furnished apartments lining these captivating and densely populated boulevards, was like any other woman.

In reality she was infinitely more than her appearance, her situation, her antecedents, her past years of unproductiveness and her present days of trivial activities would indicate. She was a force that was shortly to be set into action.

"I must lead a steady, uneventful life," Toy told herself. "It is very hard to be put to it to decide in this way, but here I am in this great city, in this great world, utterly alone . . . . one is good and circumspect for just

this—when one is brewing a solitary cup of tea, walking in crowds, choosing a picture, writing a letter, one says to oneself,—you are all right, you are, you are trying to live to the best standard you know and you are therefore good company . . . . then content sets in and content is a fair fragrant rose. Think how a bad person must feel brewing a cup of tea, or donning a beautiful gown . . . . why should I take care of myself, or adorn myself with infinite pains . . . . I am no good . . . . my heart is full of vile ambitions. . . . ."

Toy laughed aloud. A whimsical humorous mood saved her from somberness as it had so many times before saved her from the despair of loneliness; and she turned out the amber lamp, marked the card on the pantry door for the morning's supply of cream and went into her dressing room humming a little song.

She massaged cold cream into her face and neck and prodded a thin filament of white oil carefully about the base of her finger nails. She snapped off the lights and retired. She lay still and wondered about the people who had lived in her apartment before her ar-

rival. Maybe someone had planned a bank robbery there, or had hopefully dreamed of writing a play; maybe someone had schemed to sell fruit lands in Florida, minus fruit, or had trilled an operatic air; maybe someone had quarreled there; maybe there had been someone very old who had a toothache; someone very young who wore a corsage bouquet of orchids; perhaps a famous actor had lounged upon the divan and eaten iced fruit, a crisp napkin fluttering on his knee, the table and desk littered with newspaper plaudits; maybe a dashing captain had whistled merrily as he threw his things into a bag preparatory to journeying home; maybe there had been a demure widow with two children; possibly there had been a handsome Italian olive merchant who had smiled blandly as he read the rules pasted on the door and cogitated on curious American customs and wall papers.

She wove fantastic tales until her eyelids grew heavy. She crossed the bridge of sleep and her daintily outblown breath swept away her cogitations and her brain ceased its weaving for the day.

CHAPTER XI

THERE are some persons born of commonplace American parents who yet have the mystic soul of the Oriental; the soul that is quickened to flame by color; by sound; by chance happenings; the soul that is capable of rich dreaming, and counts the jewels in the diadem of erudition.

Toy was of this sort. She did not care for the things for which most women care. She was not touched to eager response by such inconsequentials as gaudy gowns, her neighbor's dishes, and furniture, the affairs of her laundress, trashy novels, or new styles in hairdressing.

She did not clatter and buzz about and fill her days with meaningless nothings. She waited in a vast quiet. She held aloof from frivolity as an anchoret draws aside from a hard faced woman calling loud from a lighted stair. In her cloistered soul she believed there was a deep meaning in life, and that she would presently come across it.

Through her time of torment and nervous collapse she had been the butt and plaything of forces long ago set in motion by others than herself. Every fright, every harsh word, every cruelty imposed on her as a child had been carried over into mature years where it had manifested itself in nervous fears and indecision. Through a proper program she now held herself in check. This program included the eating of sensible food, early retiring, cold baths, deep breathing, and brisk walks on the warm breast of nature. From the persistent perusal of inspiring and masterly literature she had formed the habit of concise and consistent thinking.

She tried to look out from herself instead of within. This was the most difficult task in her problem of self mastery. When the flood of the past came over her and her eyes smarted and her brain whirled she would hurry out and pace beside the blue waters of the tossing lake to regain her poise. The out of doors was like a huge bottle of rejuvenating essence from which she drank again and again.

There was one spot Toy loved dearly. She reached it by climbing down to the beach

from a quiet side street near the apartment building in which she lived, and making her way out on a rocky pier. She would look back across the shallow waters, beaten into salmon colored foam, as they rushed in to shore across the sand; she would meditate on the pastel towers; the gray and purple wreaths of smoke; the mists that crept and wound along the quay; at the white winged gulls cutting in; at masses of dark boats and spots of gentle green and jagged towers flung with expensive abandon against the golden sky.

Withdrawn just this short space from the vast roaring city it seemed a kinder place . . . . its smoke and dirt and grime were resolved into soft and pleasing shades . . . . its raucous voice was toned into a joyous call . . . . its sins and sorrows and mistakes did not reach out across the water but, instead, there came the low steady hum of life busily progressing.

The name of the apartment building, in which Toy had elected to live, was The Seagull. As she made her short excursions in and out of the building, and up and down the corridors and halls, she was constantly

on the watch for friendly faces; for the welcoming glance of some other woman in the house to whom she might extend the hospitality of her secluded rooms. But she made no friends in this way and soon ceased trying.

Presently, as her days at The Seagull progressed into weeks, she knew these people about her for what they were—a shallow, moneyed horde that flourishes in loud voiced groups in every city everywhere, a fungus growth on the stem of more cultured society. The men were gross and double chinned; their ponderous wives gossiped and played cards as there was no labor for their pudgy hands to do, and the most arduous task which they were called upon to perform was the nerve racking one of going about to the shops in feverish haste until they had settled on the very richest chocolates and the very gauziest stockings.

Cliff dwellers these . . . . with shrunken mentalities induced by their separation from wholesome activities. They disappeared at night into their respective crannies in the cliff; they peered from its high cut apertures; they knew nothing of real homes; shady

lawns and terraces; wide cool bedrooms; spacious drawing rooms; airy porches where cretonne covered swings, and tinkling tea services spoke of meditative, delightful hours; they simply knew they had a number on a door in a hallway, a bed to sleep in, and money to spend.

They were removed from their ancient cliff dwelling sisters by language, by time, by steam heat, by electricity and satin lined elevators, but their trend of thought was, in many instances, much the same, that is, if modern cliff dweller number one chanced into modern cliff dweller number two's apartment Monday afternoon, and discovered a piece of mahogany furniture or a marine scene there that she had not she returned to her cave and raved and raged until her man sallied forth, paid down his wampum and sent a replica of the article up to her the next afternoon. The men of this tribe rode about in cushioned cars, only returning to the cliff as a last resort, and it was a merry carousal that never ceased until the brave lost his credit or the lady ran away with some more affluent cliffite.

These agitated creatures could not feel the steady beat of the pulse that throbs in the great heart of the world; they saw no limpid beauty welling from clear springs; they were blind to the magnificence bursting through blue-green lanes; coming to flower in the snowiness of the hawthorn; rising from buttercup to star; singing down moist roads in spring; riding on the sea's white foam; they could not hear the Voice that forever calls. They rushed about the glorious world, flinging its visions and mysteries aside to ask each other whether cheese was better with pimento or without; they wondered whether the new head waiter would serve their interests more willingly than the old; whether vapor heat would keep them warmer than steam; whether the newest apartments on the drive were to be occupied by really smart folk; whether they could win enough at cards this week to pay off the debt of last; whether it would be a good stroke to change a present stodgy husband for a more dashing one; whether they could dance the year away in six new evening gowns or whether a dozen would be a better estimate; whether henna

treated hair actually improved one's looks or accentuated an oncoming pallor.

One afternoon Toy was sauntering homeward through the park after a long walk. Turning from a shady lane into the broad thoroughfare she suddenly found herself in a horrid crushing pushing mob. Some weary mortal, tired of life, had flung himself under a swiftly moving motor. Bits of his poor human form were hurled upon the curb and the morbid crowd closed in to feed its eyes to satiation.

Toy was caught and pinned between two huge unwashed foreign looking persons. She was in danger of being squeezed into insensibility. She uttered a terrified moan and suddenly someone fought a way in to her and fought a way out, holding her safe.

She opened her eyes to find herself reclining on a slope in the park near the water. She looked at the slate blue waves dashing their restless messages against the stones, and then became aware that a man was holding a cup to her lips.

"I'm quite all right now, thank you."

"Fearful crush!" exclaimed the tall shabby

man who held the cup. "I'll help you rise and I'll walk a bit with you, if you feel uncertain."

"I'm perfectly fit now. Silly of me to faint. Poor wretch—was he quite dead?"

"Oh, quite! He timed it rather nicely. Some of them bungle so!"

"I used to think of dashing from a bridge, or a high window, or slipping under a train."

"So did I," returned the man, "life pushes one to the edge ever so often. That might so easily have been myself instead of that lad. Nice chap he looked, too, with his clean blue shirt, his sturdy legs and his willow switch. Walked just ahead of me for several squares. One never knows!"

Toy was listening intently to the man's voice. She had never heard anything quite so beautiful before.

"The loneliness of a great city is hard to bear. I believe it is lonelier than a desert would be, for there one would not expect friends."

"I have tried the desert. There is peace there," replied the man.

Whenever he ceased speaking it was like

the withdrawal of a brilliant color that had fascinated one's senses. They sat still and watched the slate blue water as it rolled tumultuously forward and broke in long green lines across the sand and stones and exploded into white defiant foam.

Tears filled Toy's eyes and dripped down on her blouse.

"It's the shock of seeing the poor lad," the man volunteered kindly, "you spoke of loneliness—haven't you anyone?"

"No," returned Toy, "no one. To me the crowded streets are only turmoil, their people strangers forever rushing by; not a single friendly face, nor handclasp, nor welcoming smile. Perhaps if that poor lad had had someone to speak to—"

"That's it!" the man's voice trembled, then he added more prosaically, as if reining himself away from some intolerable subject:

"Of course, in these days newspapers in the big cities have clubs where one may find friends—that's a last refuge—failing that there is hardly much left. I know how the poor lad's heart was squeezed!"

A mist came curling off of the water. Toy

shivered and raised her shoulders, and drew down into what small protection the filmy network of her blouse afforded. She arose and the man followed quickly and stood beside her. She opened her gray leather purse, took a card from it, and with her silver pencil scrawled across the face of it, under her name, "The Seagull."

"You've been very kind to me. If you are assaulted and overcome by loneliness, and need someone to talk to—you'll find me there."

The man drew back and looked startled. He bowed in a courtly, almost foreign way that lent an air of unaccustomed aristocracy to the humdrum Chicago street. Under his shabby frayed apparel there was dignity and poise. His shoulders were broad and his arms well muscled. Toy had evidence of that in his successful struggle with the suffocating crowd. His waist was slender and his hands were beautifully shaped and well cared for, though his wrists were cuffless. He took the card and put it carefully into the breast pocket of his shabby vest.

"Thank you," he said, simply.

He stood aside as Toy stepped upon the gravel walk and turned hotelward. As she proceeded up the wind swept street through swirls of dust and bits of rubbish and paper, the strange man's low musical "Thank you" rang constantly in her ears. His voice had stirred her unaccountably. Its beauty, its smooth rich cadences had uttered volumes beyond the meagre spoken words.

Her mood became intensely reflective. How life flung its creatures about—casting some into these stone mansions that lined the way, hurling some into darkened streets; some into sun-scorched fields; clothing some richly and stripping others bare; how patient most of them were as they moved forever onward from dawn to dark and dark to dawn.

Those few exuberant ones who had the time and the inclination for the lighter things in this vast bee-hive rode about on bus tops, or threw pebbles into the lake, but everywhere there were countless tired ragged persons skirting the thin edges of the parks; there were so many ruthless hurrying wheels; so many weary eyes deeply lined at the corners; so many orchestras droning out pale tunes; so

many feet scuffling over sooty floors pirouetting on dead hopes; so much ceaseless effort to keep abreast. To Toy, Chicago seemed at times like a blustering ogre, and at other times like a breathless clumsy boy, his pockets stuffed with plunder, scrubby little dogs tagging at his heels, headed no one knew where every morning and coming back, no one knew how tired, every night.

She dragged herself wearily toward her little apartment, and down the dim hall to its doorway. She had stopped at a small corner shop and had made a few purchases, and now she fumbled with the lock, dropping her parcels and stooping stiffly to recover the fat head of lettuce, the long loaf of bread, still spongy and warm, and the quarter pound of green tea.

Once inside she sank into the embrace of a tightly stuffed green chair, under the amber reading lamp, its rays now shut off and its bulb concealed behind overlapping silk leaves fashioned to resemble a giant sunflower. It held three stages of blossoming in its stout wire frame, that is, it could be set in bud to shed a dim glow; half blown to light the book

of a person sitting directly under it; full blown to flood the center of the room and fling its warm effulgence into the corners.

Toy looked dazedly before her at the festooned walls. A small gay pattern of yellow octagons, on a navy blue ground, rushed in oblique lines across the carpet and were met at the base board by a wall of gray and white stripes where pink and blue flowers clustered and rose, clustered and rose till the moulding was reached and the ceiling began. A few of her books lay scattered upon the mahogany table—Stamboul Nights by Dwight; Fenger's, Alone in the Caribbean; Walpole's, Green Mirror and The Captives; Hergesheimer's incomparable San Cristobal de la Habana, and a number of lesser volumes. There were some odd bits of linen from which she had drawn threads in the hem preparatory to inserting threads of contrasting colors; a gay blue and white pamphlet setting forth the advantages of luxurious hotel life combined with the privacy of home, lay open where she had flung it when her searching gaze had been arrested and had turned mildly ironic at the word home.

Outside the darkening windows hundreds of turning wheels swept and swept and swept along; on the floor below merry people dined; waiters, in white coats buttoned high about their throats, served soups and meats and entrees, bowed and thankyoud and brushed away crumbs and pulled out chairs; the hotel orchestra droned and scraped; the radiator in Toy's living room sizzled and she arose to shut it tighter.

A light coming in through the striped window curtain caught her attention. She pushed the curtain aside and looked up the wide shining boulevard. The moon . . . . the moon and a star hanging saucily below it twinkling and beckoning to unseen fields of hyacinth. The stars seemed like little elves that had danced high above the world leaving their bigger sister, the moon, caught in the branches of a giant tree.

Suddenly the vast city stifled Toy. She caught at the heavy lock of the window and turning it back flung the window wide. The whirring and swishing of the wheels came crushing over her with their ceaseless song:

We're going home! We're going home!

Someone is waiting there! You are alone in your little flowered cell, but we are going home!

"God, dear God!" moaned Toy as she slipped down upon the yellow octagonal pattern of the carpet, "bring me some of the life that rushes forever along this great lighted way."

But the wheels rushed on and the music droned and the men and women danced.

Then, Toy became conscious of a closer sound, a persistent, low muffled beat that seemed to call to her. She arose and stepped to the center of the room from where she heard, distinctly, a rap at her door. She dabbed at the tears in her eyes and went to open it. She expected to see the stout, flaxen-haired housekeeper with a burden of soap; a maid with towels; a boy with the evening paper; what she saw was the dim figure of a tall man. He removed his shabby but once swagger hat, and bowed his head. He stepped forward slightly so the light fell across his face.

"I have taken you at your word, madam. I am here."

A spasm of fright leaped into Toy's throat. She glanced quickly around into her silent apartment shut away like a cut off chamber in a pyramid. Then she stretched out her hand and touched the man's arm.

"Come in. I'm glad to see you."

He strode across the threshold. She took his hat and his shabby coat, put the former on a shelf and hung the latter on a wire hanger as carefully as if it had just come from the tailor's iron. The man stood silently beside the table and watched her. Then she returned and standing near him looked up into his face.

Free from the shadow of his hat she saw fine dark eyes, infinitely tired and sad, set in a well moulded head; despair had sunk heavy lines about a full chiseled mouth, lines that a short mustache and sharply pointed beard did not altogether cover; sickness and hunger had stretched his cheeks into gaunt grayness.

"This afternoon I liked your voice," Toy told him.

"I liked your eyes—they are kind."

"Your voice tells me you are a gentle-

man; that you are to be trusted. Sit here, please."

She rolled the green tufted chair forward for him, but he stood in silence till she had seated herself on the end of the divan.

"No one has trusted me—for a very long time," offered the man.

He looked wistfully at Toy, afraid to see a quiver of doubt in her face, yet, afraid not to see. There was no doubt there. The momentary shock of his unexpected appearance outside her door had been dissipated and, in its stead, a warm feeling of friendliness was spreading over her.

The man sighed and relaxed into the green and terra cotta clasp of the chair.

"Perhaps you live on a volcano of hopes and fears," Toy suggested. "I lived there once."

"No," smiled the man, "my volcano erupted years ago and carried me away on fields of slowly congealing lava. My world is dead and buried. I am a tired ghost among unfamiliar flesh pots."

Toy leaned toward him and studied the grayness of his face. He sat very still.

"You are hungry!"

He raised his hand deprecatingly, but a stealthy weakness was creeping over him. The warmth . . . . the light . . . . the soft chair. . . . .

Toy rose and moved about quietly in the little kitchenette. She returned to swing the white enameled dining table into view, and to place a platterful of crisp bacon upon it, a cup of fragrant coffee, a mound of crisp toast, two soft boiled eggs and an orange daintily dissected. He drew forward to it, shame and humiliation in his eyes.

"One's body is such a ghastly intruder. Think of calling on a lady in a gay attempt at camaraderie and having one's knees go weak from an empty stomach! Think of calling on a lady and having to be fed! Is it tragic, or merely silly?"

"It is neither. It is turn about. You came to my rescue this afternoon, now I am able to assist you a bit. We are therefore quits and may start even."

Toy picked up a volume of poems, bound in soft, rough maroon, and read to him while he munched. Now and then, as her eyes lifted

from the page, she noticed the quiet, good breeding of his every movement. She noticed more. There was an air of studied ease and poise that she could not quite account for. His English was faultless, and he was possessed of the gentle graciousness worn by the elect. How few men could carry off so trying a situation, but this man did not fidget, nor fuss, nor knock the dishes about with clumsy dashes at nonchalance. He was perfectly at ease, perfectly sure, perfectly calm, though she knew he was suffering from acute mortification. Not since he had entered the room had he made an awkward nor commonplace move. Each slight change of attitude melted into the next with beautiful precision. It was as if a majestic presence had flowed in and the current of it had been stemmed for a bit.

Suddenly Toy asked:

"You have held an important place in the world's life?"

The man uttered a low voiced cry and pushed back from the table.

"You have seen me before?" he demanded hoarsely . . . . and stood waiting, an agony of apprehension darkening his eyes.

"No," Toy replied, thoughtfully searching her memory, "n-o—," and then, decidedly, "no, never,—till this afternoon. I knew by your mode of speech, the movements of your arms and hands, the manner of your walking and sitting down. I'll forget I asked the question, and that you answered it—with another —if you wish."

The man looked intently at Toy. Her tender, fearless gaze told him, as he had already divined, that she was one of those rare women who are fashioned of love, tenderness, charity, and who are without malice, without trickery, without idle curiosity.

"I beg pardon for my abruptness."

He returned to his toast. Noticing his empty cup Toy tripped away and brought him a second supply of steaming coffee. She read on and on from the maroon book. When her guest had finished his luncheon he carried the tray into the kitchenette. Coming back he took a cigarette from his shiny coat and asked smiling:

"May I?"

"Please do," dimpled Toy.

Then he stretched out his hand for the book

and she gave it up readily. As he read his voice roused her whole being. Life, that had snubbed her and passed her by, stood once more laughing enticingly at her threshold.

The low, rich voice woke visions and dreams; it was smooth as dark velvet; lush as ripe fruit; it trailed through deep wells of exquisite mystery; it came out a shining river pouring over bright stones; winding among happy hills; it sighed and it sang; it wept and entreated; it filled the space between the four rented walls with distilled glory; its tenderness lured and its majesty crashed; it enveloped the past and ignited the future; in its timbre there was the might and power of a king among men . . . . a king in tatters . . . . an incomparable voice and an empty stomach. . . . . Toy stared at the gray face and the drooping eyelids.

The last poem read, the little book was laid on the table. Toy and her odd guest looked at each other. Only two hours had passed, yet life held infinitely more than it had when he had knocked, half doubting, at her closed door and she had answered.

"I've not always been an outcast, but all I have to offer you now is my voice."

"I'll take that," Toy accepted. "I've tried love and hate and despair, and all I have to offer you is a timid goodfellowship!"

"I'll take that!"

He arose from the tufted chair. She gave him his hat and his coat. He stood in the open doorway, and waiting there in the shaded light, it seemed to Toy that his whole face changed in answer to some decision of the soul within. The deep lines vanished; the hard, full mouth relaxed; it took on the softly drooping sweetness of a wondering boy. Years fell away and the tired eyes looked out clear and fresh.

They looked at Toy.

He stretched out his hands and Toy's hands fell into them like cool rose petals fluttering down.

"Friends?" he asked, gently.

"Friends," she nodded.

Then he turned away without further words and rounded the dim corner at the end of the dim hall. She heard his footsteps on the gray stone stairs. She heard the muffled thud of the shutting door far below.

He had not driven to her door in a limousine; he had not flourishingly escorted her to a ball; he had left no violets on her desk; he had not even left his name, yet Toy ran happily to the wide window and looking up to the moon caught in the dark branches of the swaying elm, and to the winking stars beyond, cried—

"I'm no longer alone!"

And it was not of the strange man's shabbily accoutered frame she spoke, but of the delicate and oddly rugged spirit that looked from his tortured eyes.

Days passed, during which she heard no word from her inscrutable friend. She thought of him often. Their evening together stood out from the barren background of former years as a fruitful and living oasis stands away from stark desert sands; but because of the light he had brought into one evening the succeeding nights were darker by contrast.

It was nine o'clock. Toy had read the book of poems, again, from cover to cover. She felt unsettled; almost irritable; lonely. She went out at last and walked a dozen squares, made a few purchases in a brilliantly

illumined drug store, where there was everything in evidence but drugs, and then returned to the brooding silence of her sequestered rooms.

She sat down in the engulfing embrace of the huge armchair and read an evening paper. Finished with that she turned the leaves of a novel, but whenever her gaze wandered from the uneventful pages her eyes made a hurried round of the empty chairs set stiffly about the room until she finally became so overburdened with the utter emptiness and loneliness of her apartment, of her life, of her world, that she went sighing into her dressing room.

She switched on the center cluster of lights, and those over her dressing table, and, momentarily, the blaze of radiance quickened her spirits. The thin pearliness of the globes gave her a passing thrill of pleasure.

Slowly drawing the tortoise shell pins from her luxuriant hair she swept it free. It fell in pretty tumbled confusion below her waist, and a delicate fragrance of wood violet rose to permeate the quiet space.

Languidly she undressed, then opening the window and scurrying away from the bois-

terous rush of a damp breeze she snuggled between the crisp sheets. A path from a street lamp struck out a brilliant spot on the counterpane, and drew a gay island on the blue and yellow rug.

Toy felt more acutely alone than she had ever felt before; more futile; more useless; more hopeless. The strange man had, somehow, made life seem a different thing the night he had come, and under his compelling tones warmth had edged tentatively back into her heart. But, after all, what was one evening out of a week of dreary nights . . . . out of a month . . . . out of a year . . . . years . . . . eternity . . . .

When she had awakened, the morning following his visit, his presence had hovered in the sunlight; his voice had echoed in the stirring trees; but with the chill of falling night the illusion was gone . . . . gone . . . . even the memory of him was worn thin with the constant turning of it over and over in her mind.

She had spoken to no one all day save the drug clerk, and monotonous hours lay before her.

Presently music caught her ear, sharply. It was directly beneath. Toy had always disliked jazz, and now she remembered having seen a notice posted in the hotel lobby that had to do with the mid-week entertainment. Someone was giving a ball in the solarium on the top floor of the building so the usual dancing had been transferred to the hotel dining room that lay directly under Toy's apartment.

No sleep now.

Even that solace was to be denied her. She thought, with a grimace in the dark, of the ancient Chinese torture that prodded people into wakefulness when they desired sleep. As she turned and tossed, restlessly, a weirdly beautiful melody reached her. There was a muffled accompaniment of drums, and then a plaintive, wailing instrument carrying a bitter-sweet air.

Toy's dainty limbs relaxed, and she lay quiet in the dark and fancied she was on the balmy shore of some far south sea isle listening to brown men playing in the moonlight. Borne on moving wings she was swept clear of disappointments. The three grinding, perspiring musicians, hidden by the thickness of

a cement floor, loosed this pensive little voyageur from bondage for a few hours. They dried her tears. They sent warm blood to her cold finger tips; they brought her sweet and tender messages, and she blessed them for their art.

At ten o'clock a lull came. The musicians left their chairs, and the guests moved on toward the spacious lounge and into the lobby; talked and smoked and ordered cooling beverages.

Again the night rushed at Toy with bold, staring eyes.

The telephone bell rang.

She hurried from her bed; she shut the window and stamping into her blue satin slippers and catching her velvet gown from a chair she ran to answer the summons of the bell. Of course it was a mistake, for there was no one to call her, but at least she would hear a human voice . . . . very probably an eager friendly voice . . . . it would be sweet to be in touch with someone though a stranger, for a short moment. But it was not a mistake. It was the man of whom she had recently thought so continually. He asked in his beautiful deliberate tone:

"Is it you, my friend?"

"Yes . . . . this is kind in you!"

"Rather, let us say, I am rewarding myself after a weary day. You are well . . . . and safe . . . . and happy?"

"Yes . . . . now." Toy's tone was thankful.

"Then, good night, and sweet dreams!"

"Oh! . . . . good night!"

So, the wheels and the crowds . . . . the lines of grim faced houses . . . . the noisy restaurants . . . . the wind swept water fronts had given him back to her. He had sought her. He had needed her simple "good night."

The exquisite realization that she was of slight benefit to another mortal laid delicate finger tips on her eyelids and she slept.

The next evening he presented himself at her door again, and they spent a few enchanted hours reading and conversing. At his knock Toy had started happily toward the door, and upon opening it she had not drawn away from him as she had upon the occasion of his first visit; instead she had held both hands out to him, warmly, and cried:

"I am so glad to see you!"

"Not more glad than I am to be here!"

"Sit here . . . . tell me of yourself . . . . what have the days held for you since our last chat?"

"Very little."

"You know," Toy smiled at him mischievously, "I have a woman's proverbial curiosity."

He shook his head, "I cannot credit that. Whatever you do is prompted by kindness. Mere curiosity is never kind."

"Well, call it what you will—I want to know who and what you are."

"I am a failure."

The words were quietly spoken, but behind them there was the anguish and the accumulated suffering of a brain and body that had known a long period of desuetude.

"Knowing I am a failure dare you take me as your friend?"

"I should not care a penny for any one who had not known the discipline of failure. The finest fruits spring from the darkest mould. Now you are ready to live!"

"But, dear lady, I have nothing. I am an

unknown. An outcast. My few poor earthly possessions are huddled together in a battered trunk, its exterior unmarked. I have lost my foothold on the slippery affairs of men. Until I came to you had I died and found forgetfulness in the warm earth there would have been no living soul to wonder what had become of me, why the returned letter, the silent room, the unanswered bell. I confess until I won your friendship no living soul called me friend and I knew no place where there was the comfort of companionship, real companionship."

"Can't you commence life anew—today?"

"I have nothing with which to commence."

"You have breath in your body and light in your soul. It is enough!"

He shook his head and looked very sad.

"There is one great obstacle."

"What is it?"

"I cannot remember."

"You cannot remember what?"

"Anything!" he replied. "I cannot remember who I was, nor where I lived and toiled. I cannot remember whether there

were those persons who had claims upon me. I cannot remember anything!"

So that was it! That was the reason for his terse careful sentences; his air of profound thought over the most trifling occurrences; his studied avoidance of any discussion of affairs other than the moment brought forth.

"You live—you room or board somewhere—what do they call you there?"

"N. S.—or, sometimes, Ennis."

"What does N. S. signify?"

"The nameless stranger."

"Ho ho! They have not heard you read Shakespeare in my green tufted chair."

"They would not have known it was Shakespeare if they had."

"What do you call yourself—to yourself?"

"A fool."

"I do not like either of your appellations. I know you are not a simple Mr. Ennis, and I know you are nothing of a fool. I shall rename you."

"Perhaps this will help."

He held out his arm and pushing his coat sleeve up over the wrist band of his shirt disclosed a half obliterated laundry mark.

"This is the only piece of linen that has bridged the gulf, and there is no mark on anything else I possess. This, as you see, was a superior piece of wearing apparel in its time. My other linen is new and coarse."

Toy knit her brow above the squat faintly etched letters that ended in a blot. They spelled nothing. They meant nothing. They were but a source of aggravation. She straightened her shoulders after the inspection, and formed the letters into a meaningless word:

"ROM."

"That is unquestionably part of my name, but whether part of my christian or surname I have not the slightest notion."

"Rom—it is quaint—I have it!—By your own suggestion you have led me to think of you as a wanderer over the hill and dale of life. You do not speak the language of these noisy streets, but of those picturesque folk who follow the moon and dream; you are like a Zincali gipsy who has no definite home, but who speaks a melodious language the whole world loves, the language of the searching, restless heart whose quest for beauty is never done."

"You stir me to wild dreams!"

"You have always dreamed. In some one of your dreams you dreamed so deep that you have not yet waked—and asleep you lost your name, your friends—I shall help you to wake again!"

"And the name you will call me?"

"It is the name of that beautiful language of the Roma and Zincali people. You carry the first three letters of it on your sleeve. I shall call you—Romany!"

"Romany! It is synonymous with freedom! I shall owe allegiance to no country but the realm of your marvelous fancy. When I entered your door to-night I was a hopeless wanderer, alone, unanchored. When I go out of it I shall go as a man bearing three great gifts—a friend, a country, and an awakened soul!"

"You don the garment of your adopted people easily and well."

"Whether, bearing my old name, I murdered another human, whether I absconded with the savings of widows and orphans, whether I was a wife beater and a moral leper—I do not know. I simply know there

was a crash, and after the crash, unending blankness. Dare you rename me and go on?"

"What have these vague suppositions to do with to-day? What has a man by some other name to do with my friend, Romany? I am not afraid."

Toy smiled. She laid her hand on his shoulder.

"To leave our adopted gipsy land for a moment and return to a more prosaic topic—I believe you are an Englishman. That much I feel quite assured of. Do you remember London at all?"

"No."

"Paris?"

"No."

They sat down. Romany leaned across the low table and caught both of Toy's hands in his.

"I want your friendship to continue more than I have ever been conscious of wanting anything else these weary days of oblivion—if in granting this boon you are not besmirching yourself by giving me that light in a dark world—your trust."

"Will you in turn trust me?"

"To know you is to do that."

"Will you let me show you the path pointed out by the old Chinese proverb that says: 'You cannot prevent the birds of sadness from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair'?"

"And where will you take me to show me this path?"

"What a question from a gipsy! Outdoors — aren't all paths outdoors?"

"You mean — ?"

"I mean that we'll go systematically to work to build you afresh. Never mind who or what you have been. That was yesterday and yesterday is gone. First you must find some occupation that will not tire your brain, but simply provide it with gentle stimulant."

"I draw and sketch rather well. I might letter cards for show windows."

"Good! I'll plan a simple nourishing diet for you, and then, as opportunity presents, and your strength permits, we'll walk and swim and row and try to be happy in the kindly outdoors. Please promise me that you'll not look sad any more. Your face is the weather vane that shows which way the wind of your

heart blows, but there is a secret that has to do with that weather vane. It need not turn with the wind! It can be made to compel the wind to go where it directs!"

"Which means?"

"That if your face smiles your heart must follow."

"You have laid out a wonderful program. I hope to report, shortly, that I have resigned from my dishwashing situation, and am installed elsewhere in a position more befitting me as the friend of a marvelous and very wise woman."

Romany was like a worn bit of wreckage laved docile by the tide that had at last been buffeted into a sunlit harbor to ride submissively at anchor in a sheltered nook where dwelt the half peace of everlasting passivity.

Toy called in a thousand tangible and intangible ways to the sleeping manhood in Romany, and, somewhere, deep in his being, an imperishable something answered to the call . . . . faintly at first . . . . falteringly . . . . tentatively . . . . by a lift of the eyelid . . . . a curve of the lips . . . . an attitude of the body . . . . then by a half formed wish

. . . . by a thought . . . . by a spoken word . . . . until, at last, the deep purposes and harmonies Toy had glimpsed in him at infrequent intervals had come to stay.

A man, from whom half his faculties had gone, he dare not think of Toy as a woman. He worshipped at the shrine of her sturdy spirit that was coaxing him back to the path from which he had strayed so far. He thought of her as a goddess who had stooped to his earth for inscrutable reasons of her own.

Both of them had the capacity for throwing off belittling conventions as they would shake off an odious curb bit. Both had an extraordinary capacity for idealizing the humdrum. A day in the woods, that to some persons would be simply a day in the woods, the outstanding points a bothersome lunch basket, mosquito bites and dusty roads—such a day to Toy and Romany meant they would carry through weary weeks of the hot city the remembrance of merry little hills romping across a generous sky; rows and groups and conclaves of trees promenading up the slopes: all of nature on the march to some unguessed goal, and their hearts amarch with it.

Their expanding friendship made it possible for them to converse with that sweet freedom that blots out small talk and digresses into cool wide channels that in turn pour into larger waters whose shores are enchanted lands.

Like many very sensitive people Toy and Romany were often constrained when they found themselves among blunt, bluff personalities, so that they presented almost stoic masks that utterly hid the real warmth and generosity of their natures, and caused less sensitive people to judge them harshly and underestimate them. Such a condition seems a most unfortunate blunder on nature's part, at first sight, but apparent diffidence is often the outer wall of strength behind whose protection a fertile mind works quietly and to definite purpose.

The days ran into weeks with no change in the pleasant companionship between Toy and Romany, that is, with no change unless the quiet and gradual deepening and widening of their mutual interests be counted in.

Toy arose, breakfasted, dressed and lived because of Romany's voice, and because the

problem of his reestablishment offered enigmas for solution that lured her on from day to day through the uneventfulness of a world gone stale.

Romany slept, arose and washed dishes in a restaurant, with meagre return, because of a kindly woman to think of and go to at frequent intervals. He lived through days of torture and despair that he might spend evenings of delightful communing with Toy under her amber lamp.

Again and again Romany left the kitchen door of the restaurant, where he was employed, to seek other means of support. Again and again was he obliged to return to the thing that produced the least strain on his shattered nerves.

He could not concentrate his mind on any work requiring attention to minute detail. Columns of figures sent him reeling drunkenly homeward. He could not finish out a day at any task that required close application and thought. He was willing, but too weak. His nerves played him tricks. His head and his back ached; his limbs seemed made of molten metal; he felt frozen and

heated by turns; he could not trust himself; often he could not sleep. He was wandering close to that shadowland where Toy had groped so long. Physically and mentally he was at low ebb.

More and more often Toy was overwhelmed by a desire to sit down and talk to Romany about himself, but she forbore through a delicate regard for feelings that she knew were already torn and strained by hours of unfruitful cogitation.

At times she felt a savage desire to rend and tear by harsh, pointed questions the veil that his foggy memory had cast about him; she wanted to find his depths and heights. These caprices of hers were quelled by the happy hours in which she listened to his voice bubbling on over a day's experiences. His moods were rare things; fine things; and they were so often broken by persons at the door; by insistent window washers, or burly plumbers, or by the garbage collector who had a villainous habit of pounding on the kitchenette cupboard and pretending he couldn't see the package neatly wrapped to be taken away.

Nights came in which Toy wanted to go

to Romany's front door and ring the door bell and command him to stop painting, or washing out his handkerchiefs, or dreaming, and to come down and tell her what he was learning of life; if he had found some answer to its hourly riddles, what next? What does anyone do next when the substance is gone and only dreams left? . . . . does one lock the door and pull up the cushions and dream on forever content, at last, to let the physical man lie inert, or is it best to rebuild wasted tissues so that some fine brisk day one may go out again to plunge in the uneven struggle for limousines and gold headed canes.

She had rebuilt herself and often she wondered just why she had taken such pains to make fit a creature who, on the whole, was accomplishing so little. She wondered whether Romany would be happier to remain in oblivion where his wants were almost primitive in scope.

There was just one thing that interfered with Toy's donning her straw hat and seeking out the man whom she so often sat pondering and that was that she had not the slightest idea where he lived. He had built

up about their friendship a most irregular regularity. He could not be telephoned to, written to, nor reached once he had left her in the evening to slip into the winding crowds. Though it had been mentioned between them Romany, mistakenly felt, that the spreading before their mutual gaze of his dismal life in its squalid quarter of a wretched square would snarl the thread of friendship that was winding about the golden ball of days.

But, in spite of the misgivings that assailed them during the hours in which they were separated, when they were together their courage and cheer ran high. They went on playing their parts in the big tangle that is life, looking ahead, over disappointments and obstacles. They reacted on each other in such an inspiring way as to cause them both to advance, in thought, with the free stride of big souls who rise above the mire of non-essentials.

Toy felt a growing conviction that Romany had once held burning ideals into dark skies where tired eyes had caught the spark and quickened to hopefulness. Her conviction of

some hidden quality in him, capable of moving people and things, grew steadily.

"Romany, sometimes I feel as if I were an oar whose tiny might is about to launch a stout craft into new waters—from the first I have sensed great power in you."

"You make me feel like Napoleon shuffling around in deshabille!"

"You are vacationing now—this is in between seasons."

"Perhaps it will always be so—I have succeeded in remembering absolutely nothing yet."

"You will!"

"I wonder."

"When one has been sunk in a deep and deadly grip with life one cannot expect to resume things where one left off."

"It would be a comfort, at least, to know where it was one left off. I am merely playing about the edges of time."

"Perhaps this is a kindly lesson in values imposed by some unseen hand."

"Perhaps. It would seem only fair to gain strength of conviction after the loss of the strength of the body."

"From great depths one becomes conscious of great heights."

"With memory gone one is on a flat and endless plain."

"Dear man . . . . I know . . . . I know."

"Somehow my soul always seems to be skirting a dark place. It lurks on the edge of some hidden danger."

Toy patted his arm.

"In living my life from day to day in that frightful, greasy kitchen among unshaven, uncouth fellow-workers, I am overwhelmed by a sense of handling a dynamic force stupidly and clumsily."

Romany's fine eyes grew dark with anguish. Toy reached out for a magazine that lay within reach. To divert his thoughts and shield him from the debilitating loss of appetite she had learned followed closely on the heels of many such conversations she held the magazine dramatically before his eyes.

"Let us turn from our problems and consider this modern magazine."

Romany easily divined her desire to keep him on the highroad of good cheer and set himself to follow any lead she might offer.

"Pshaw," he replied in an argumentative tone, "five-eights of it is consumed by advertisements!"

"Ah! but the joy in those back pages. Don't forget that! There is vers libre on the front page, but the barber can't read it. However, the ad for soup gets him 'where he lives.' A whole family doesn't gloat over a thrilling tale of young love, but it does thrill over perfumes, candy, kodaks, bungalows, toothpaste, watches, luminous paint, rat poison, foot warmers, playing cards and false teeth."

"I see your point and I should like to add to your cleverly drawn conclusions a few of my own, that lead me to announce to you now that we are on this subject, that I have frequently noticed with pleasure that there are no soul searing mysteries, no untrue lovers, no broken hearted step-children, no faithless wives in the back of a magazine. Instead there are jolly faced youths rushing across the pages with boxes of chocolates under their arms; serene faced mothers standing over efficient washing machines that are bubbling away at the week's washing while these im-

maculate ladies read the morning mail; trim country houses, blooming gardens, spotless tile."

"And there is no high brow stuff in the back of a magazine! Just plain good United States ads; full of joy; full of pep; full of things to interest grandpa and the baby, uncle Ed, the cook, the chauffeur, the prima donna, the prizefighter, the minister, the gambler, you and me, and the butcher!"

So with quips and witticisms they fought the constant challenging and slumping of neurasthenia — by systematically whipping themselves into gayety.

Toy was determined to drag Romany up the hill toward health. She commenced slowly as she might have commenced to build a sickly child. She walked with him in the open air; she insisted that he rest at intervals; she constantly diverted his thoughts into peaceful and cheerful channels; he adhered to the diet she had prescribed and ate eggs and cereals and drank plenty of milk. When she knew, through her woman's intuition that he was short of funds she invited him often to dinner with her:

"I'm so dreadfully lonesome, dear Romany —never mind if you haven't a clean collar, come without one, and we'll pretend you are my gipsy cousin camped outside of town in your van!"

Then he would come and perhaps he would say:

"Sometimes I think you pity me—I don't want that!"

"No, I pity the fat, oily man who has not known the refining fires of despair; I pity the man whose god is money. Suppose you are marred and not quite as at the beginning—show me the ripe and ruddy fruit that comes to perfection without a withering leaf or pruning knife."

Catching both of her hands in his and pressing them warmly he looked deep into her eyes.

"In your heart you have set a goal for me. I shall struggle to reach it. Where once I must have had brains, ambition, ability and above all, manliness, now I have nothing save a sort of mask behind which my blackened soul hides and shivers in fear of being discovered and pointed out by prosperous men.

Looking through the eye holes of the mask I may yet try to feel somewhat as other humans and strive to be fit to be called your friend—even a dog might do that!"

The unnamed ghost of past experiences and days sat with them always at their feasts. Each morning the ghost arose with Romany, coming forward from a shadowy corner of the room to trail after him as he descended the narrow stair; to dodge through the weather beaten door and accompany him as he hurried to his work; to stand beside him and shake his lean gray head over the pans and troughs of boiling soapy water filled with greasy dishes over which Romany presided with gentle patience.

Sometimes when the days were unusually long, and Romany was completely tired and unnerved he would turn on the ghost in a frenzy of despair, calling to him in unuttered words such as a ghost might understand:

"Speak! Tell me what you know! Who am I and who are you?"

But, of course, this was a sad waste of time as they both knew and these outbursts always

ended in renewed attention to the tasks at hand.

One spring night Toy and Romany started out on a rambling walk such as they were accustomed to take frequently, and which Romany's slowly increasing steadiness of limb made it possible to extend to cover added squares each week.

They wandered toward a street where the displays of cheap wares in brightly lighted windows drew their curious attention. They commented on the jumbled masses of merchandise, and commenting, wandered on and on till they presently came upon little knots and groups of uncouth men who were passing small evil looking vials back and forth from mouth to mouth. The sweetish sickening odor of ether lay heavy on the stale air.

Romany glanced uneasily at Toy, but her eyes were set ahead, her color was high and the novelty of the rough district was in her blood, and he saw she was bent on continuing and held herself away from his unspoken word of caution.

Men lay about the doorways in drunken attitudes, and the lights were growing fewer.

Suddenly a huge, burly fellow, unshaven, reeking of liquor, collarless and filthy, stumbled from a darkened doorway, turned and lurched backward toward Toy. She took a quick step ahead leaving Romany to catch the force of the man's falling bulk. Romany caught him between the shoulders and pitched him forward.

It was a gentle touch, but the utter softness and pliability of the drunkard's frame added impetus to the push. He collided with a gang of roisterers coming through the doorway, his hat fell upon the stones and he followed it.

A snarl arose.

Toy looked back. Half a dozen fierce faces were thrust out of the night above the man's fallen form. Whether they were his friends or his foes his fellow-prowlers stood ready to avenge him when he was down. Toy looked in terror toward the corner, but no officer patrolled the lighted spot. A battle was imminent. They would pounce on Romany . . . . they would beat him down. All her careful weeks of work and watchfulness would be undone. Though in far better condition than

on the day she had first seen him, he was still weak from illness and lack of food. They might kill him! The dark streets . . . . the provocation . . . . the creatures more brute than man . . . . a small item in the newspapers . . . . Toy turned faint and sick . . . . the men, swearing and snarling, rushed at Romany.

Then, in the dimness of the sordid street, a singular thing happened. Romany used a weapon . . . . an odd weapon. He stepped under a flickering light, raised his chin and spoke.

Toy had become accustomed to the peculiar beauty of his voice, though she never ceased to marvel at its cadences and at its flexible colorings. She knew well its depths of sweetness, its middle tones of content, its light rare tone of joy, but she had never heard it in command, in authority, in a power that swelled and exacted obeyance. It rang out now on the squalid street and the small ugly impulses of the night and its denizens fell away into obscurity as commoners fall back from the path of royalty.

"Keep your friend out of the path until

he is sober. I am sorry to have done *that.* I did not mean to knock him down. As gentlemen you will accept my apology."

They were not gentlemen, but they accepted it. They stood in open-mouthed astonishment before a majesty that had sprung full lighted from the dark. Never had they heard a voice like Romany's before. Never had their coarse bulks been held in check by the fine thread of magnetism. Never had they come in contact with genius and its gentle greatness. Never had they felt the melting of their sodden souls, that had so often weltered in the might of bloody prowess, and now stood cowed before the mightier touch of spirit.

Toy's eyes were fixed on Romany in fascinated wonder. He was no longer apologetic, dispirited, graciously aloof. He personified unyielding strength and the dominance of unquestioned superiority.

In that obscure street by the magic of his voice, the poise of his body, the unwavering fixity of his eyes he stood revealed for what he had once been.

"But who," Toy asked herself through tense lips, "who can he be? He held these

men as he has held others . . . . people are strings upon which he can play. He has been roused tonight by danger to himself, to me . . . . and he has played! He has stepped back into the past, and for a brief moment, he has assumed his place. . . . . But what place? Oh, if I only knew!"

They went home quietly.

"Did—did that make you remember—anything?" Toy finally asked.

"No." Romany's voice was sad.

CHAPTER XII

THERE was, on Ontario street, a flat faced gray stone hotel.

It had on its street side, seven steep stairways and seven narrow doors. It had been made by throwing seven rickety rooming houses into one domicile. A huge sign was suspended over the center doorway that read, HOTEL ROSEMARIE. It was unspeakably drab, unmentionably odoriferous, unthinkably shabby with its floors from which all varnish had long since receded, its creaking boards, rattling windows, dark recesses, stained walls and decrepit furniture. The tortuous halls and dark stairways reeked with the nauseating staleness of the dead hopes of other years. Strange creatures entered there at night to tumble, exhausted and sullen, on its uncomfortable beds.

One approached the Hotel Rosemarie, if one were so unfortunate as to have to approach such a place, through a litter of papers and loose debris that was eternally swirling about

underfoot, rising, eddying, and catching pedestrians about the ankles as they passed, and when caught in particularly vicious gusts, would even ascend to smite them about the face and ears.

Romany lived in this place. There was just one reason why he lived there. It was cheap. His nights were made hideous by a dwarf on one side who snored with gusto, and by an Italian on the other who uttered horrible imprecations against his enemies, and seemed to have fallen out with every other Italian in the world, as he never had done with his anathemas from one week's end to the next.

The furniture in Romany's room had the appearance of first having been set out for usefulness about the time of the flood. It was bleared and smeared, faded and streaked. The walls might have been improved by a flood as they were hung with cobwebs and soot.

Generations of finger prints were visible on the window sills, door panels and furniture. The bed was lumpy. Chunks of wood had been gouged from the baseboards to let wires out, and it soon followed that these same aper-

tures let rats in. The baths were few, but that was a minor fault as no one seemed to use them.

Romany's trunk stood in one corner of his room. In it were some evening clothes, outing flannels, riding breeches, a crop, a few smart scarfs, a set of Dickens with Cruikshank illustrations, silk and woolen underwear, three pairs of lavender pajamas and a box of high priced Russian caravan tea.

Romany spent many hours puzzling over this jumble. It was so much more decent than the place to which he had brought it that he kept the key turned upon it. He had removed just one thing from the tray of his trunk where he had found it carefully wrapped in thick layers of paper. It was a picture. He could not remember having bought it. He could not remember that it had been given to him. He could not remember ever having seen it before, yet there it was, among his clothes—he supposed they were his clothes—they fitted him.

He had unwrapped the picture and had hung it above his bed. It was painted on delicate parchment under which gold leaf was

laid. The picture was long and narrow and bore the figure of a slender woman whose gown, upon close observation, was found to be composed of tiny lilies and dragon fly wings. In the meagre light from the twenty-five watt bulb that hung high in the center of the musty ceiling, the picture had a strange, unearthly gleam. It was almost as if someone were standing a long way behind it with a raised candle that flickered this way and that and sent out brief tremors of golden light in narrow shafts.

Romany knew that the trunk and the picture must be direct links with his past. He knew he must have been a person of some standing, but just where he had stood no amount of staring at the trunk and at the picture served to divulge.

Romany arose one morning to find himself steadier on his feet and clearer in his mind than he had been for many a day. While he dressed in his narrow room, hitting his elbows against the sharp corners of the cheap oak bureau, as he never failed to do when a fit of abstraction threw him out of his customarily careful pathway between the bed and the

closet door, he suddenly resolved to make an end of his dish washing situation.

He went to the restaurant and asked for the money owing him. It was not much and it was handed to him accompanied by the remark which, hitherto, had been almost welcome to his ears:

"Well, if you can't find nothing else to suit you, Duke, c'mon back any time an' yeh c'n slop Lake Michigan round in the dishpan as long as ther's people to eat grub an' dishes to wash, which'll probably be mostly ferever."

"Thank you," replied Romany, while silently determined to remain away permanently if his increasing strength of mind and body would permit.

He strolled to Clark street with no definite purpose in view and walked northward. After he had walked a dozen blocks, watching for signs in the shop windows that might point to employment, he came upon a rambling severe faced building that had almost a medieval aspect with its quiet inner court and high windows. He soon found, on approaching the doorway at the end of the row of cur-

tained windows that it was a motion picture studio.

The wheels of the picture industry that had been at a standstill for some time were slowly revolving again. Romany had overheard a number of stranded professional men at the Rosemarie talking hopefully of securing work as "types." As he stood there vaguely musing before the door he thought whimsically that he might be presentable as a type. He went in and his entrance was made at an opportune moment.

A large blue coated man wearing a badge and having the general aspect of a police officer burst from a smoky cubby hole under the wide stairway that rose to the left of the doorway through which Romany had come. His aspect of fierceness ended with the carefully polished badge, for he was a mild mannered old actor who had been dropped from more arduous business to the comparatively placid position of door keeper.

"Were you ordered around?" he asked Romany.

"No. Thought I might be able to get something to do."

"Well, they'll be shooting in half an hour. You'll get something now if you can get it at all to-day. Go up."

Romany ascended the stairway to the studio and stood looking into the vast room. In its depth and height and width and under its powerful lights and gigantic ladders and wings the groups of actors standing about seemed almost like festively attired pigmies.

The director was in a quandary. A title artist was needed. McQuade, the studio artist, had been taken ill the day before and a message had just come in from a hospital saying there was no immediate prospect of his return.

"Got to get somebody! Got to get somebody right away!" The director fussed and fumed and paced the floor while the actors stood watching him calmly. It was not their trouble. They were hired by the day and it did not matter to them how slowly matters progressed. Some of them sat down on convenient boxes, others lighted cigarettes and strolled about in groups.

Romany advanced a little farther into the studio.

"Know anybody that can draw?" queried the director in a loud tone, looking toward an actor who was standing near Romany. The actor shook his head.

"I can," volunteered Romany.

"What can you draw?" the perspiring director demanded.

"I'll show you if you'll indicate something you want."

"Gimme these titles—done on black, Chinese white, you know—you'll find some junk to work with on the third floor—gimme a shadowy castle, river flowing by—all that stuff, you know—girl—heroic size on opposite shore—scant drapery—something peppy and dashing—Hi, Jim, show Mr.—what's your name?—Oh,—Hi, Jim, show Mr. Rommanee up to McQuade's studio. McQuade isn't coming back for a while and Mr. Rommanee can use it if his stuff passes."

Romany was ushered up a flight of dirty stairs into a disorderly studio where, after poking about among paints and crayons to accustom himself to the materials with which he was to work, he sat down at a drawing board.

He was accurate, painstaking and possessed of a fanciful imagination that lent charm to whatever he drew. After submitting his first work for approval or disapproval he was engaged and sure of a place among men—however sketchy the men and ramshackle the place. Romany's heart sang with joy to know that he had, at last, said a final farewell to the hateful restaurant and its piles of thick dishes.

He swept the floor of the studio and he found a yellow cat and a white kitten tucked away in a box of discarded titles under his table. He promptly adopted them, setting out a bowl of water and buying some liver on his first trip down to the street.

Toy was delighted at his good luck and rejoiced with him heartily.

Whenever pictures were being shot Romany worked feverishly and spasmodically, dashing up and down the dirty stairway, being yelled to from three floors below and hallooing his replies the same distance.

He soon grew fond, in his aloof way, of the studio "gang."

Billy, the laboratory man, who spent much

of his time in the dark room, was seen to be a cheery lad on his infrequent trips out into the daylight, and Belle, who sat in almost utter blackness at the printing machine, was a nice little thing.

Romany was sent down to deliver a message to her one morning, and made her acquaintance by viewing the outlines of her back and the fluff of her hair that was faintly visible under a diminutive red light that hung just above it.

"Hello!" exclaimed Romany, "this *is* a dark spot! Regular mysterious cave—how do you feel sitting here all day in oblivion?"

"Whatever that is!" returned Belle's voice from Belle's mouth that was hidden around the other side of her bent shoulders. "I got through thinking how I feel and all that gush ten years ago when I first came on this job. I never see the sun except Sundays and then I get mad 'cause it wakes me when I want to sleep."

One day Romany carried some lilies of the valley down to Belle. He had a long pin in his hand and he held the flowers and the pin out to her in his gracious way. They were

blood red under the wicked little light and pitifully unlike the pure white things he had bought at a store that morning on his way to the studio. But, however the red light dashed their ambition toward beauty, it had no effect on their fragrance.

"Wear them," suggested Romany, "they grew in the sun."

"Aw, thanks!"

A red tear dripped from Belle's eye, splashed down her red cheek and off upon her red gown. Nobody had ever given her a flower before.

"Whaddaja do it for?" she asked Romany.

"Oh, just because you are in the dark—and so am I."

"Why, I thought you had that swell studjio that fronts on the street. Gee! I'd think that was heaven. What do you mean, dark?"

"Oh, it is a different sort of dark from this. Dark in my mind, you know."

"Got the blues? Oh, everybody gets those. Sometimes I wonder what you want to work around this place for. You seem like such a gentleman—but the director told me that the other day when they called you down on the

floor to help out on that Palm Beach scene that you acted like you'd been before the screen all your life. Knew just where to step and turn and all about it. Was you ever on the stage?"

"I don't know," Romany replied dully.

"You don't know? Say, what kind of an answer is that?"

"It is a truthful one."

"Well, I wisht you'd explain yourself!"

"Very well, then, but I must ask that you do not repeat what I tell you—please."

The faint red light registered Belle's nod.

"I had some sort of disaster—once—and ever since then I have been unable to remember—anything about the past."

Belle was silent for a moment.

"That's too bad, Mr. Romany. Don't you know who you was?"

"No."

"Say, I wisht I could get a good look at you. Maybe I'd know! Guess I've seen all the actors that ever did summer scenes and sat around in tropic sets on the cold floor of a Chicago studjio. Gee! This being a moving pitcher is great with pneumonia and every-

thing thrown in. Maybe you're Vandenberg Atlas—he ain't been heard of for some time. Your shape looks some like him. I ain't had a good look at your face. Com on out into the drying room while I look you over."

Belle shut off the current after another hundred feet had clipped through, and she and Romany made their way along the slippery floor of the dark room, past three protecting doors and out into the drying room where skeleton hogsheads were revolving slowly round and round carrying the drying film.

She caught Romany's arms and turned him toward the light.

"Naw, you ain't him!"

"Haven't you ever seen me before?"

"Naw, never," said Belle decidedly. "I don't believe you belong in Chicago. You look sort of English to me, and Lord knows your language sounds like a king or something."

Romany laughed. Toy had taught him to do that. Little did he realize the rare sway laughter gains over neurasthenia, but she knew and constantly urged upon him the lighter side of things.

Romany enjoyed hearing the actors and the girls laughing and chatting in their dressing rooms. Sometimes they came and leaned over his shoulder while he worked, and sometimes he slipped out on the balcony that ran along the end of the studio and watched the floor in action under the powerful lights.

Just as life for both Toy and Romany began to take on a rosier hue a dire circumstance interfered with their quiet evenings of reading and interchanging ideas.

Upon Toy's return to her apartment one night she found a note, written on the hotel stationery, in her letter box. It was from the house detective. She was requested to appear in the manager's office. She went at once, totally at a loss to understand the summons. The manager set a chair for her.

"I am sorry to have to send for you, madam, but evidently you are unaware that single ladies are not permitted to entertain gentlemen in their apartments. We must ask that you bring your friends into the lounge."

"I am sorry if I have broken a rule," Toy returned breathlessly, "that is the last thing I should wish to do."

"The notice is printed on the card in your dressing room, but perhaps you had failed to read it. There are plenty of cosy spots in the lounge and in the lobby, as well as in the solarium. We hope you will make your friends comfortable there."

"Thank you for calling my attention to the matter," Toy returned, rising, and terminating a most embarrassing interview.

Confused and heartsick she stumbled up to what had begun in the past few weeks to assume a semblance of home. Her evenings with Romany were the center about which her life revolved.

There were the books he had brought and that they had read together; there the plant purchased with his first studio money; there the picture he had sketched of an apple tree in blossom. She remembered well the night he had tacked it where the light from the amber lamp fell across it.

Toy stood beside her table looking down at its scattered signs of domesticity. When she moved, at last, her hands were cold and her limbs were stiff.

Day by day she had added to Romany's

strength. Day by day she had watched faith and hope come into his eyes. She knew that the rooms in which she lived and thought and planned for him meant his one anchor in an uncertain sea, his one port in time of storm. To take this comfort from him would be a cruel thing. He was unable to entertain her in hotels and cafes. Things looked rather dark.

Where could she go?

If this rule, against which she had unwittingly run, obtained in one apartment hotel it would in another. Started on the absorbing process of rebuilding a fellow being she was terrified lest she be forced to let him slip back again.

She knew well what the attitude of a smug world would be toward so quixotic an undertaking. She would be laughed at for her pains if her motives were not altogether misunderstood and an unsavory construction put upon them. Yet she lay awake all night trying to devise some scheme through which she might continue her companionship with Romany.

In the weary hours of early morning, half

asleep, she drifted back over the years, and suddenly she was confronted by a familiar face. It was the face of the pink clay peddler she had moulded so lovingly, and had seen crushed under Cousin Henrietta's cruel heel.

But he had not died, nor had the spirit that fashioned him died, nor the supple fingers lost their cunning though they had been unacquainted with the beloved moist clay all this time in between. The little pink clay peddler, looking down the years, crushed and obliterated, rose through extermination to point a way to Toy and Romany in this extremity.

Sleep out of the question, Toy arose and packed her trunks at dawn. By nine o'clock she was ready to move, having cleaned the tiny stove, emptied the cupboard, and put everything into the state of neatness in which she had found it upon going into the apartment for the first time.

There would be no trouble in subletting her rooms as there were a hundred names on the waiting list. She hurried away, leaving her trunks with the porter, who was to keep

them until she had found other quarters and should send for them.

About noon, after a brisk search for accommodations that were very different in location and nature from the impressive Seagull, she entered a drug store on a corner in a part of the city that was unfamiliar to her. She telephoned to the studio and asked for Romany.

He was alarmed. She had never telephoned to him before.

"Don't worry!" she laughed in answer to the agitation in his voice. "I simply want to say that I am moving away from The Seagull."

"Moving!" he repeated in a dazed tone suggestive of earthquakes and bombs and floods, "—moving—why—and where?"

"Romany, I feel shiftless and idle and I've decided to go to work."

"What are you going to do—bake bread, or write poems, or trim hats?"

"None of those things. I'm going to secure a lump of clay and go to modeling."

"I didn't know you were versed in that!"

"I'm not, but I'm going to be—you'll see!"

"Wonderful woman! If that pleases you

I am glad. I'll even sit for head and shoulders."

"Oh, will you, Romany? I was hoping you would!"

"I'll toddle around tonight and help you tack up and all that."

"Yes, please."

So the apple tree found more congenial surroundings in which to blossom in its state of perpetual floweryness; the potted plant looked brave and fine on a high white mantle; the books were scattered on a low window seat where one might drop down, momentarily, to read one of them against an orange cushion by a good light.

Toy's garments were hung away behind a curtain and it was designed that she compose her limbs at night on an abbreviated bed that was dignified during the day by a covering of blue velour that made of it a divan.

Here were not the luxury, and the tidiness of The Seagull, but here were freedom and home. It was a freedom that called aloud with siren voice to a man and woman alone, but Toy and Romany had no ears to hear any but the voice of clean and faithful endeavor.

They were not lovers. They were marvelous friends, they existed in a state only extraordinary and exaggerated conditions can produce, not a state to be eternally continued lest one or the other suffer, but to these two a beneficent state that made sunrise and sunset more joyful than it had been alone.

Behind Toy's cosy living quarters there lay the solution offered in the early morning of a distressful day by the pink clay peddler—a studio. There the strong, pure north light, which fell directly from the sky, would light Toy's work. A continuous and unchanging flood, the same all day and every day, except in mere brightness; the walls were dusky so that little reflected light would come to interfere with the pleasant bath of colorless illumination.

These were favorable points of which Toy took no cognizance. She knew nothing of an artist's nor of a sculptor's life; nothing of the conditions under which they worked; nothing of their requirements in selecting a studio; she only knew she must keep Romany with her during his leisure hours in such a way that it would cause no comment.

Masses of wet clay made their appearance in the studio, and these were followed by tubs of water in which the clay was set to steep. There was much splashing and dropping about of "mud." Toy's half serious purpose shortly became wholly serious and intensely absorbing.

Perhaps the old studio walls smiled at their strange tenant who stood through long hours, with eyes eagerly alight, fashioning clumsy objects; perhaps they looked a bit surprised when the clumsiness fell away and really beautiful contours and lines were shaped and moulded.

Toy loved the quiet room. She had, at first, been chilled by the severe outlines of an austere carved cabinet that stood against the east wall; there were pieces of armor lying upon it left by some former occupant who had worshipped at its shrine of musty grandeur and had gone away to leave it because, perhaps, express charges were high and funds were low. Later she admired it and kept her account book in its cracked top drawer. The haughty old piece had an air of withdrawing from the increasing untidiness of the room,

and to make friends with it Toy placed upon it, among the swords and bits of dusty pottery, her first finished work. It was the face of a child, in bas-relief, almost expressionless in sleep. It rose from the flat sheet of clay at the forehead and melted back into the clay just below the tiny curve of the chin.

"It is symbolic of my present knowledge of art!" she told Romany.

"It has peculiar beauty."

"It is faulty."

"They are the faults of sincerity. You need not worry concerning them. Your touch will grow more subtle as your hand grows more bold."

Toy soon found tools of wood and iron to aid her fingers; she discovered that a straight edge scraped away the clay faster and more completely than her fingers could; sometimes she used the end of a match; sometimes the blade of a knife, or the bowl of a spoon. She learned to make a mixture with glycerine to prevent the deterioration of the clay and its consequent shrinking and cracking through dryness. She sprinkled it frequently with a powerful squirt as lovingly as if the unwieldy lump were a blossoming garden.

As she worked she constantly threw fragments of the clay into the residuary lump with a wide motion, half impatient, half joyous. One Sunday she found herself in the mood to try a likeness of Romany.

His permanent engagement as staff artist at the picture studio had enabled him to move from the Hotel Rosemarie into more pleasing quarters fronting on the park. It was there Toy reached him by telephone.

"Will you come over, Romany? I want you to sit for head and shoulders as you promised."

"Of course."

"And Romany—"

"Yes."

"I—I—Romany, I wish so much of your face were not hidden."

"You mean that the mustache and the beard are no longer in favor?"

"Yes."

"Very well, they are doomed."

Romany left the telephone in a mildly excited state. He had been conscious of a growing desire to see his own face that was assailing him more and more frequently; he had

wondered many times how he would appear if clean shaven; here was an invitation to try conclusions with his countenance that he had no valid reason for refusing.

When he presented himself at Toy's door she stood looking into his face astonishment in her own.

"It is almost as if you had removed a blanket from your mouth and chin."

She drew him in and after a short conversation she posed him in the studio. He was, by far, a finer looking man than she had suspected. She had not been able to compute his age when he wore his mustache and beard, but now he was plainly a man of forty. She went to work, eagerly, inspired by the unusual beauty of his face.

In her model of Romany she fell upon a pose combined with such an expression of face as conveyed an almost religious enthusiasm. She was quite unaware that in this she was closely adhering to the underlying principle of all great sculpture. Yet the living model did not influence too decidedly the conception of her spirit's eye. With her uninstructed fingers; with untrained habits of eye and hand

she labored, without premeditation, upon that plane upon which great works of art may be thought to be called into existence. She was a shining reed through which the ecstasy of beauty and of the creative force ran again and again.

With the feel of the clay under her hands came a tumult of feeling into her breast. The dumb clay . . . . the dumb clay . . . . and yet somewhere in its center there was hidden the quivering soul of the beautiful universe. It was just to have this clay, so, moist and pliable, under her hands that she had lived and suffered . . . . that she had, unconsciously, absorbed the sun of summer days . . . . it was for this she had been born . . . . for this and nothing beside . . . . with the clay under her hands it was neither midnight nor noon . . . . she was swept into a state where her flesh and its trival complacencies held no allure . . . . deep in the heart of the clay were subtleties . . . . the flesh is incapable of subtleties . . . . it is either hot or it is cold . . . . it is quick or it is dead . . . . but her soul and the clay . . . . her soul wreathing it . . . . adoring it . . . . fashioning it . . . .

her soul skimming into eternity and returning to put a curve here or to indent a hollow there . . . . her soul pouring out gradations of emotion . . . . flaming, burning, flaunting, praying . . . . her soul at white heat and the clay answering . . . . answering steadily, nobly . . . . answering in masterly lines . . . . in heroic sweeps . . . . in exquisite contours . . . the dumb clay brought to life!

CHAPTER XIII

WHILE life at The Seagull had been quietly happy with a staid mode of advance from one calm day to the next, life in the house in which Toy had found studio quarters, was a revel; a song gaily sung; an exuberant cataloging of gay hours; a breezy whimsey; a tear quickly dried; a laugh easily sprung; a systematic hustling away of sorrows and a determined striving for joys.

In all Toy's days she had not before mingled with people who were devoted to the arts. She knew little of that plastic layer of humanity to which even starvation is sweet if it is undergone in the proximity of idols; she knew nothing of those souls who skim, threadbare and shabby, through a long lifetime trailing bits of melody and verse; she had not dreamed that persons could fan their belief in their creative ability into fires that eternally raged even though nothing were produced through their intensity; she did not know that hundreds of mediocre persons for-

sake the humdrum path of business, if they ever find it, to scribble, to sketch, to paint, to sing, to act, and to go hungry, disheartened failures to their graves, while a few of their more fortunate fellows find the magic key to the glittering halls of accepted art and rise in affluence to some noble end.

Toy knew none of this, but having rented these new quarters she was to find it out. She was plunged precipitately into a totally strange environment. The large pinkly attractive woman from whom she rented her studio was a newspaper woman and her house was a central point for many kinds of people. Her expansive smile and generous heart were magnets that drew many restless men and women to seek her counsel and aid.

Odd, eccentric people had attracted her at the beginning of her journalistic career, but as she attained fullness of years and approached the solid facts of life and made acquaintance with the everlasting realities she came to realize that queerness, however alluringly draped, is seldom more than queerness; that eccentricity expends the force of its daily power in sustaining eccentricity; that behind

the enigmatic smile, the averted eyes, the intriguing manner, the bizarre coiffure, the airy nothings, the solemn mysteries, behind the curt or blatant speech of these disciples of oddity there lies too often emptiness.

So, lately having hardened her heart in a businesslike manner, she had rented her studio to Toy instead of harboring there some indigent artist.

Toy was initiated into the mysteries of meals eaten from paper bags; into the irregularities consequent on late retirings and later risings; she viewed grimy bath tubs and rolls of lint under beds; soot on the furniture and stained walls engendered by too infrequent calls from the plumber; she met painters who talked paint, but seldom made good use of it; embryo playwrights who argued and debated scenes, but kept them neatly packed away in the limbo of nonproduction; singers whose voices were cracked and whose dispositions were acid; she made the acquaintance of dreary specimens who tore feebly at the breast of their fickle mistress, the stage, unable to meet her obligations or their own, for one of the hardest bills in the world to settle

is the bill life presents to those who have wasted their substance in riotous living.

Toy came to know many odd and many interesting people. She met, almost daily, men and women who were great, and near great, as well as the countless persons who were nobodies, but withal were quite charming in their inefficiency, lovable in the very unloveliness of failure.

She talked to sad-eyed women who had left quiet bucolic surroundings to plunge headlong into that maelstrom called "the artistic life." When sanity had re-asserted itself to lift a dazed head and look back at past peace, the astounding fact had presented itself to these weary ones that the artistic life is very often not life, nor is it artistic, for art is simple, pure, clean, while the mad whirl of some of its devotees is in many cases too often impure, unclean and stupid in its unawareness of that beautiful simplicity that is close kin to the nobility of truthfulness.

Among some of these people Toy encountered again the lightsome sweet camaraderie of the old days with Jerry in Mrs. Reel's boarding house, only here emotions were in-

tensified; smiles were brighter; sorrow was keener; here, indeed, was the very essence of emotion; feelings ran close to the surface; here human relations, failings, triumphs, loves, and hates were dragged into the common light of general discussion, and there was an air of living every moment to the full and plunging on to the next, flags flying, bands playing.

Quite by accident Toy had stumbled into this particular set of people, taking Romany with her, and whether by accident or design, fate had placed them for a time most propitiously for the furtherance of their plans. They thoroughly liked and enjoyed the novelty of their surroundings, and as they were both agreeable, kindly and interesting they were accepted and adopted and made part of the talkative throng that constantly came and went; arrived before breakfast; stayed to tea; made free with the newspaper lady's chairs, stove, piano, dishes, floors, window seats and books as if they were their own—or, perhaps, a little freer.

This amiable lady was listed in the telephone book and in the city directory as Mrs.

Belle Sude, but among her vast coterie of friends she was designated as a "topnotcher," "the readiest hostess in Chicago," "no end of a good sport." These and many other flattering and lively appellations trailed in her wake.

Mrs. Sude and her following took Toy and Romany to be lovers. They met the situation with amused complacency and gently combatted it. For a short season wonder and speculation was rife, then Toy and Romany were accepted for just what they seemed to be, two friends who were mutually helpful, and their relationship found quiet pathways in a milieu where to be once understood was to be left in peace.

Toy and Romany found that the sand bar of approaching middle age may become a halcyon spot of bright mornings, fair noons, and nights of utter peacefulness, that is, when middle age has learned not to dye its hair, incarnadine its smile and calcimine its chest.

With simplicity of living, directness of thought, earnestness of faith, middle age inherits the glories of past dynasties; those accumulated treasures of dead centuries that have been eagerly lived by philosopher and

sage, and by the vast blanket of ordinary peoples whose drift and trend, this way and that, have moved boundaries and made histories.

These treasures, only dimly perceived at twenty-one in the opening stretch ahead, are sweetly remembered and nurtured at sixty as things once dearly vital in the stretch that lies behind. To the thinking man and woman every earthly moment is precious. Before the faces of those who cannot think and cannot see beyond their clothes, their card tables, their engagement calendars, and their neighbors' activities, a curtain is hung that obscures all the witchery of real life. Behind the curtain, these faces of narrowed lids, prying or unseeing eyes, shriveled throats and coarsened lips, grow ashen day by day, till at last they fade and die never having seen, known, nor understood the beauteous thing called life.

Toy and Romany were not of this cult. Circumstances had driven them into brackish back waters where they had endured the waiting of terrible years, but they were out on the high seas at last.

In Toy's companionship with Romany she

found the most complete and perfect joy. Day by day she uncovered a self in him that he had forgotten and that she barely glimpsed at rare intervals . . . . a self made of fire, wit and sparkling camaraderie.

Toy had not been drawn to many men, though numbers of them had crowded into her home when she lived with Vale. She had found a few women of more than passing interest. Women were more subtle. The average masculine companion of Vale's, his sordidness, his greed, she had shaken her head over after a few conversations.

Romany, however, was delightfully decent, perpetually fair. Each exploration into his consciousness brought forth new gifts of heart and mind.

Half days came, when released from his title making at the studio, Romany sauntered toward Mrs. Sude's house and ascending the short flight of steps that led from the courtyard directly into Toy's studio, called to her:

"Lady fair, will you trust yourself to me and to a country road for a bit of a holiday?"

"Of course! Do reach up, Romany, and

get the wicker basket from the shelf and I'll pack some things in it we'll need."

On these brief dashes into the countryside they carried a motley collection of holiday assets, such as luncheon, books, Romany's tobacco, fish lines, fresh handkerchiefs and embroidery.

There was one nook to which they went most frequently. It lay at the base of a long sloping roadway that had cut a handsome country estate in two parts, laying the hospitable white house, its lawns, shrubbery, arbors, and other neat signs of sophistication to one side, and laying its broad barns, blooded stock, and fields of grain to the other.

There had once been a bridge at the end of the road, but a freshet had carried it away and as its absence diverted the noisy dusty stream of Sunday motorists the owner of the country estate had not replaced it, but instead had erected a large sign, NO THOROUGHFARE.

"This comes of not having a motor!"

They had reached the end of the road and had laid the basket at the edge of the stream. Willows swept its placid surface, birds

skimmed low. Toy sat down, tossed her hat upon the warm grass and swept her hair free of its confining net.

"In a motor we should have rushed madly by this charming spot, or worse, we should not even have tried this road with its forbidding sign."

"Quite so," Romany nodded. "You are a remarkable woman. Most women would say, 'Oh, dear, we just must have a motor—one can see nothing of the world at all this way—everyone has a motor these days—the Smith's have mortgaged their house to get one—the Brown's put their grandmother in the old people's home so they would have less expense and could get a second hand seven passenger—the Hillton's actually gave up their trip abroad to buy a car and tour their own country'—while you, my wonderful friend, are content to trudge the highway."

"All these other women—these Mrs. Browns, and Mrs. Smiths—haven't you to trudge with, Romany."

"A pretty compliment, dear lady, but I cannot attribute your marvelous state of mind to anything of worth in myself or to your sweet

friendliness for my oddity. Your creed is contentment."

"I have fought for that creed—if, indeed, it is mine!"

"How have you fought and with what?"

"It is too long and to dreary a story for this blue and gold day, Romany dear—but—I know! I'll tell you of one weapon I have. Every clan and tribe and people have had a weapon. Some of the ancient spear heads are very curious. I have seen specimens of them in museums."

"Oh ho, and your weapon—?"

"A baked potato!"

"Extraordinary!"

"You see, Romany, in these days of policewomen, travelers' aids, and well lighted movies I am not in need of a javelin or spear. We moderns are not called on to slit ribs, nor puncture collar bones. Most of our decisive fighting is done inside our heads."

"But you, who have no enemy, why should you need a weapon at all?"

"Indeed, I had an enemy—a horrid, mean enemy, Mr. Blues, who sometimes called and sat down in my cranium and jeered at me. To

get rid of him I tried flying into tempers and crying, I tried illness, I tried sarcasm and independence. But there he sat!"

"And how did you finally annihilate the bothersome fellow? I know you have done that for I have not caught a single trace of him."

"Well, I tried everything I could think of with no success and then I tried a baked potato. It got him!"

"Elucidate, please."

"I mean I simply became overwhelmingly interested in the most commonplace thing I could find. I was on a farm. There were potatoes for breakfast and dinner and supper. I turned my attention away from Mr. Blues and centered it on a potato. Oh, the warm, pungent steam from this delectable vegetable as it lay broken in half on my plate! It carried the fragrance of wide bright fields; the warmth of gently coaxing summer days; the mystery of still nights clung to its dark jacket; its glistening whiteness spoke of rivulets running silver under the moon; it had sprung from the residue of a century's fair leaves, that whispering and crooning, had carried

their sweetness to earth. When I discovered all the wonders that lay inside the potato that led me out of doors to see where it grew. I had been very ill and was slow in getting well. I dug about in the loam to see how and where the potatoes grew and there, far away from a city and from doctors' offices, I came across the four powerful remedies all great physicians prescribe at one time or another—fresh air, pure water, plain food and faith. Many a costly prescription, disguised in Latin, has called for just these."

It was a still day; a rare day in which they both knew a strange exaltation of spirit.

Together they strolled into the woods; deep woods; they looked at the leaves blowing; clashing, careening in the breezes; leaves that were coarse; delicate; slim; broad, veined; jagged, smooth; leaves that clung in slender clusters to twigs rising skyward in delicate brown tracery; leaves that spread thickly covering stout trunks with a spicy blowing blanket; they watched little animals scampering in and out, bright eyed; flashing tiny legs strong as slender wire; they saw old stumps eaten away, their decay covered close by

spongy moss; white flowers blossoming in black shadows; bright spots yielding mists of savoriness to the drawing rays of the sun; they heard exquisite notes from tree tops; broad whirring wings; they watched a drifting feather. The breeze blowing . . . . blowing . . . . blowing; the leaves rocking . . . . rocking . . . . rocking; and stealing, tentatively, through the woodland scents the acrid sweetish aroma of Romany's pipe.

Hour after hour they sat, spellbound, on a smooth knoll and rested their eyes on the clear water of the deep sunk stream; fed by many springs it was crystal cool in its purity. The powerful and invisible balm of the meadowlands and woodlands rose in a thousand fine streams to soothe Romany's jaded nerves; through the grandeur of outdoor tapestries these magic forces came; through austere old trees defiant in the blaze of noon and presently marshalled along the thin edge of twilight; through blue moonlight that illuminated the corners of their hearts until their awed gaze saw mysteries and the beginnings of mysteries startling in their newness.

A delicious sense of mastery spread over

Romany; an indefinite, indefinable sense of power; power over what—? Power to be used where—? Kind Heaven! If he could only remember! Or if he could only forget that he could not remember . . . . this woman who sat so sweetly and so gently beside him was all he possessed in the world . . . . and he did not possess her except as a loving slave possesses the good will of his master. While Romany accepted her many kindnesses with outward calm inwardly he hugged them fiercely to his breast as shining rays in a veil of uncertainty.

When, by the expression of his face, she knew his soul was plunged in a fit of striving and agonizing over the problem of his forgotten past, Toy laid her hand on his shoulder. He sat at her feet, the smoke from his pipe curling off hazily, his book forgotten on the grass.

"Never mind, Romany—let it go! When the time comes for you to remember it will all come back—you are not yet ready."

"Waiting is harder than dropping from exhaustion in the race."

"I am convinced that this period of waiting

holds great benefit for you—how effective is a pause in music; how full of quiet purpose the bare garden before the springtime; how necessary the quiet thought before the uttered word; how full of meaning and opportunity is every period of waiting; a period that precedes each of nature's triumphs; a period lacking which there would be no world nor beings to people it. Courage, my friend,—remember always that, 'No star is ever lost we once have seen; We always may be what we might have been.'"

Romany chuckled:

"You have built so strong a castle of content about me that even in my most frantic moments I cannot break through the walls."

"You have no need to break through walls—some day the door will swing wide and you will be free."

"And perhaps I shall not look with great favor on freedom when it comes if gaining it I lose the castle wherein I am now so happy."

"One need never lose the castle of content once one has learned to build with the small opportunities at hand."

"While I speak of regaining the freedom

that lies in recollection I believe that, perhaps, I am freer now than I have ever been, for I am not a slave to fashion and luxury as I suspect I once may have been. My tastes are modest and my comforts simple—these are the two outstanding things that mark the progress of civilization so I cannot be far wrong in thinking that they mark my own."

"You are not in bad straits at all; you are, in fact, a capitalist."

"Indeed!"

Toy nodded mischievously. She pulled a linen thread from the bit of handkerchief linen on her knee and drew a green thread through the tiny rivulet of space left by the strand she had withdrawn.

"Yes, you have the poor man's capital."

"And that is?"

"Character."

"When all is said and done life is a strange problem."

"And very often there is just one thing that makes it at all possible for many of us to go on with it."

"Yes? What is that?"

"The living for some one else."

Through the quiet afternoon the reviving sun beat upon Romany's tired limbs. Whenever he stretched his arms and sighed contentedly Toy smiled. His tenseness had always been painful to her, and she knew that without relaxation there could be no repair of wasted energies. His languid aimless stretching out and upward meant to her that he was making a long stride on the road back to health. She felt a deep conviction, born of common sense, that when his health had returned his memory would not lag far behind. Already he was speaking of events in history, of places in other countries, of famous persons and things.

"Romany, why do people indulge in lifetimes of futilities . . . . what is the answer to it all?"

"I wish I knew."

"Does anyone?"

"I have encountered no one—that I remember . . . . each person is seeking the answer . . . . each one is asking the other what it all means . . . . and while we ask centuries roll away."

"Sometimes I wonder, Romany, if we are all simply set figures in a pattern?"

"You wonder whether you and I struggle upward because we are placed at a point in the whole where struggling upward is the motif? You wonder whether one can shift his pattern?"

"It almost seems so now and then . . . . the reformed thief . . . . the repentant drunkard . . . . don't these creatures change their patterns?"

"Or were they listed, perhaps, in the section where two patterns commingle?"

"You mean that one cannot get away from what is set for one?"

"Yes, I mean something of that sort. I don't, of course, narrow it all to some message that is written for each of us in the stars."

"That would seem absurd, wouldn't it? To think that little you and I should have our infinitesimal doings plotted and recorded . . . . to think that in heavenly realms cataloging and bookkeeping should be done over you, Romany, and over me, Toy."

"It does not seem quite sensible to think that each individual should count. The record of a generation might be written and as parts of the generation you and I might

count in. I like to think of this as being somewhere close to the truth."

"If one believes things are set for one what does that lead to?"

"Patience."

"Is that the quality that is leading you so calmly through these days of uncertainty?"

"That . . . . and your affection."

Romany laid his hand lightly over Toy's where they were clasped about her knee.

Toy shut her eyes. It seemed to her as if he had laid a snowy fragrant flower across her fingers . . . . a flower he had called patience . . . . at whose center a black velvety depth drew in the shadows of the day and transmitted them into vague sweetnesses that stole through the tiny veins of its gleaming white petals.

Patience . . . . just to view the world with patience and trust made it all less terrifying . . . . to handle the colossal stupidities of people with patience so that one might walk among them unharried . . . . retaining one's belief in the ultimate survival of beauty. . . . .

The misty distant murmurings of the vale

were wafted to them in faint tinklings . . . . over the billowing little knolls . . . . through the deep sweet grass . . . . through the gnarled old apple trees laden with their pale burden of blossoms came the low muffled beat of a bell; the deep bleat of old sheep . . . . the ragged shrill cry of their young . . . . the crunch of clumsy hurrying wheels on the white ribbon of a road that fragrantly bordered ran up the hills and dropped quickly away on the far side into the luxuriant verdure of fruitful valleys . . . . the beat of some old horse's hoofs as he shambled along past the fields of clover . . . . the clover . . . . the firm white heads nestled among their staunch leaves . . . . the full purple heads pushing proudly past their leaves of dark green plush . . . . the sugar sweetness of these myriad blossoms as it was wafted through the silent air cut at odd moments by the journeyman bee plying his trade buzzingly . . . . the splash, lap, run, of rills of water purling to shore and slipping out again, through crevices . . . . over little stones palely covered and smoothed by the relentless wash of years of softly lapping waters . . . .

the far cry of a man at golf . . . . the near rustle of squirrels at play . . . . the dropping of acorns . . . . the quick sharp thud of them in the stillness catching at the ear like the crack of a century in half . . . . the slow easing of pine needles to earth . . . . the weedy tang of mist from a nearby marsh . . . . and under, over, through it all, the warm breath of the earth . . . . the earth. . . . . Toy felt a deep worshipfulness of the very loam her feet rested upon . . . . the brown life giving particles. . . . .

She loosened one of her hands and drew it from under Romany's. She dug her white nails into the loam and brought up a palmful and held it out for his gaze.

"I should like to turn pagan . . . . to worship the soil."

"Many people before you have done so and they were not all pagan."

"How little value we place on this earth!" She let it run softly through her fingers.

"The lover scrapes it from his shoes before entering the sanctum of his sweetheart . . . . scrapes off the very thing that brought his loved one into being . . . . that nurtured her

on its luscious fruits and delivered her to him, radiant and ready."

Various delightful perfumes drifted toward them from luxuriantly blossoming vines; vines heavy with brilliant flowers and honey sweet under the heat of the sun; vines that with the passing day would turn to filmy wraiths and wave mysterious silver tendrils at midnight under the magic of the moon. Romany read aloud from Shaw's, The Unsocial Socialist, and when he had ceased they both day dreamed—a delightful interlude.

"Look! Whom do you see coming through the opening in the wood?"

"One of those quaint people conjured forth by your fancy, Romany?"

"Can you guess which one?"

"No—or, rather—if I guess I'll miss the pleasure of your telling."

"His spirit lives forever in the forest; his presence hovers in every silent shadowy grove where bird notes are hushed and eternity whispers in faint sweet ways; you have heard his low musical laugh over the hills, greeting pale dawns, vitalizing the core of black nights; it is his throbbing heart whose ecstasy lives again

in every vibrant activity of the open. He loved the open roads better than all the glitter of a sumptuous court; to him each tree was a friend and every bit of moss a luxuriant carpet under his fleeting foot. He spurned the canvasses of minor artists and watched the Great Artist in the sweeping masses of foamy clouds piled across sunset skies. His soul and body were free of crippling conventions; free to rove; to dream; to hope; to live; to understand; he robbed the rich to feed the poor; his oddly meshed character has become synonymous with the message whispered by fluttering leaves through eight long centuries; he was fashioned from the very essence of freedom—he was at once a good man and a bad one."

"That tells me his name."

"What is it?"

"Robin Hood of the merry greenwood."

"Quite right."

"But why have you called him bad, Romany?"

"He was bad because he acknowledged no law. He was good because he was tender and kind. He loved the frail and old; he was im-

patient of trappings and sham. He made his own rules and they were not like the laws of men. They did very well for his communion with birds and trees and streams and pale fields of nodding grains. Laws or no laws the spirit of the birds and beasts, of the buds and grasses persists forever in a quiet unending hopefulness, and so it is with the beauty in the spirit of Robin Hood. It has laughed and sung through centuries of sunlight and storm. It is abroad on the open roads today where every wayfarer may feel it in the caress of breezes blown round the world from rich grown garden places. The spirit of Robin Hood is the abiding place of those great treasures of the earth that belong to you and me, the millionaire and the toiler in the ditch. His boundless spirit overrides our more timid ones. He is the chancellor of an unforgetable prowess."

"I have had the pleasure of meeting our medieval friend in a modern theatre, Romany. People viewed him through lorgnettes from upper boxes; they gazed at him from seats squeezed off at the sides; they came in smart clothes; shabby clothes; they watched him

eagerly with old eyes; dim eyes; glad eyes. Through him they heard the silent powerful call of the open that is louder than any strident city voice."

Romany gazed off with the far look that presaged the slight corralling of memory that was possible to him—a memory that only responded to things outside his own life, but held stubbornly to its aversion of all things concerned with his personal existence.

"From a confusion of thoughts I remember his epitaph:

> "Hear undernead dis laitl stean
> Laiz robert earl of Huntingtun.
> Near arcir ver az hie sa geud
> An pipl kauld im robin heud.
> Sick utlawz az hi an iz men
> Vil england nivr si agen."

"People now-a-days are all so afraid."

"Of what?"

"Of everything! Afraid their household gods will be broken; afraid their relations will die and forget them in their wills; afraid of burglars; afraid of heat; afraid of cold; afraid of other people's opinions; afraid to live and afraid to die. Always afraid!"

"And fear makes dwarfs of them."

"I know. It is a melancholy spectacle."

"The more fear a mortal lets in to his conscience the more that conscience shrivels. Only free unshackled souls, hopeful souls, get a wide view for they rise above the clutter of small things."

"You are free, Romany."

"I try to look out instead of in; away and up instead of down. You have taught me that."

"I have only helped you to remember that once you knew that."

"Delicately put. Until the curtain of my memory fell I must have been an independent sort."

"I wish I had known you always, Romany."

"You have."

"You are filled with beautiful subtleties. I cannot always follow them. If your soul were visible to my eyes I believe I should see it shimmering with sensitive fineness."

"You think of me, dear lady, as you wish I might be. Toward attaining the height you have set for me I strive hourly. I am just clay; I am weak; but I have a spattering spray

of hope that rises in my heart as the feathery tips of Corot's tree stretch upward."

"Why! I had not thought of Corot in just that way! that is, of course, the alluring quality in him that one fails to catalog; that leaping away from earth as if it were a brown snare that had caught and held life momentarily and that in soft green rebellion life imprisoned in the tree tops stretched away to larger spaces. What poetic things even trees are under your scrutiny, Romany."

"Plato has said that, 'Nature is an enigmatic poet.' Do you know why, dear friend, I said you had always known me?"

"No, Romany, why?"

"Because of your love of peace; your keen enjoyment of life and all its myriad phases; your perception of the beauty that blooms in hidden places. These things are also in me, so having known the things that have built my soul, and the souls of countless other men and women, you have known me and all those others. It is a kinship that flows deeper than blood."

"Very often, Romany, I have a dreadfully selfish wish. I wish that we might go on

as we are now—forever. Life with us is so simple, so uneventful yet so marvelously satisfying."

"I have had that wish myself. I love these hours and I love the hours at your studio when you work so absorbedly over that lump of clay that is to be myself. I love the simple charm of your little home."

"I almost hate to finish the model for which you are sitting, Romany—it will be like laying aside a tremendous interest."

"There are magnificences in your strong supple fingers and in your brain of which you are not yet aware. You will go on from this bust of myself to some more important work. There is a veritable fury of strength pent up in you. The surge of it has carried me back into life. Do you realize that?"

"Your own strength is carrying you forward. Life is soon done for many people; for those people who can only hope, grieve, enjoy just so much and then, when their jar of emotions is filled, they clamp on the lid and set themselves aside on a dark shelf to gather cobwebs and rust."

"You will never rust."

Night had overtaken them. They sat down nearer the water's edge watching the ascendant moon as it flushed the hill. Romany's mood became fanciful, and as was often his habit, he rambled into musical lilting lines, the beauty of his voice and his words catching at Toy's heart sharply.

"Spread thinly, sweetly over the earth
This song of crickets. . . . .
A white moth fluttering at the
Edge of night,
A farmer's dog browsing through the
Shrubbery burying his treasures in the
Moist loam under a blackthorn tree.
And I, drifting and dreaming, on the
Wings of enchanted hours at last know
To the full your exquisite kindliness.
The splendor of your comprehending
Spirit rides across the night.
Drifting, I watch its many colors.
Oh, that I might keep it through an
Eternity of dreams; that I might drift
Forever where the perfume of your
Presence lies richly on motionless air.
If I might see the laughter in your eyes;
If I might hear your friendly voice through
An endless moonlit night of dreams
I should be content to wake
No more!"

Toy did not move when Romany's voice had ceased; she did not turn her head. Her curls beat softly against the curve of her cheek; her slim fingers wove in and out of the cool grasses at her side. They had crossed the invisible dividing line that lies between friendship and love.

Romany hoped she would look at him and yet he hoped she would not. Loving her he knew it was best to put that love away, for there, against a distant tree, leaned his familiar hazy ghost.

Toy longed to turn into Romany's arms; she thought of his lips, of their gentle sweetness; she thought of the ecstasy that their pressure would bring to her waiting soul.

The moon had slipped behind a cloud. A light sprang out across a fragrant field from a low roofed farm house now dimly outlined against the darker trees.

An intangible sadness lay across their spirits. The ghost bent forward from his place beside the silver birch and peered at them, half anxiously as if almost willing to cast aside his tenure of past days and leave them to their own designs.

But it was in neither of their hearts to disregard him so unceremoniously; he was their charge; their obligation; they must return him to the country whence he came; safely; comfortably; honorably or he would remain with them to the end.

Romany helped Toy to her feet. He gathered the scattered articles and replaced them in the wicker basket. They walked quietly up the long slope of the gravel road homeward bound. The ghost walked behind them. In his eyes there shone a dawning hope not quite obliterated by a trembling tear.

At the summit of the slope Romany turned and, as he turned, the moon rode away from the obscuring cloud and the earth shone in its pale shower.

Facing the wide fields, the grandeur and majesty of them struck afresh into Romany's soul; the music of a million tiny creatures swelled in chorus; the beat, beat, beat of deeper, sublimer symphonies burst on his sensitive ear; exquisite melodies; heavenly dissonances; regal harmonies; suddenly above the vast concourse he was aware of the sweet wild voices of violins, the smooth dulcet rip-

pling of harps, the warm rich swelling of invisible cellos, the merry laughing hastening brilliancy of flutes; before his eyes rose faces, faces, faces—waiting—he was struggling through the haze; he was remembering; the ghost leaned forward from the roadside and gesticulated frantically; his face was eager and alight; then, as swiftly as it had lifted, the curtain of memory fell; the facts were blotted from his sight; the music ceased; alone the crickets and night birds sang their summer hymns; Toy plucked at his sleeve and wanted her rubbers from the basket, for they must cross a field and the dew had gathered.

On Romany's other side the ghost, an erudite fellow, kindly and whimsical as well, clapped Romany upon the shoulder, and that he might not brood over himself turned his thought again to wider spaces in a few chosen words that had often crossed Romany's lips in former years. Catching the whispered prompting of the ghost—*astra castra, numen lumen*—Romany spoke the words aloud to Toy:

"'The stars my camp, the Deity my light.'"

They laughed happily as the shadows on the far side of the field enveloped their trudging forms.

CHAPTER XIV

ROMANY loved the changing colors of life. He would stand absorbed before children rolling down a hill; picking dandelions; stretching toward the sun; he sauntered, wide eyed, after emerging from his place of employment touching and drinking in life as it came to him from the passing crowds.

In order to come to a clinch with life and secure thrills from it some men are obliged to quicken their sluggish senses with liquor; some with carefully pursued hobbies; some with exaggerated pleasures, but for Romany it was only necessary to wander slowly along a street.

Faces had a never flagging fascination for him; as each one passed, smilingly; scowlingly; indifferently—he read its lines; its hopes; its fears; its geniality; its stubborn pride; whatever was offered he took into himself to muse upon; he wondered at his ability and eagerness to decipher the emotions pic-

tured on these passing faces; it was an ability that afforded him constant enjoyment.

When he was a boy someone had given him a box of cardboard houses. He had set them up into streets and lanes and alleyways. He had erected churches and office buildings and had arranged public squares with stiff little wooden trees at the corners.

Then he had liberated a whole troupe of tin people from their partitioned box and had pushed them back and forth among the paper walls and over the fuzzy grass plots. For days this toy city had held him spellbound. His excitement was wild but repressed. He was experiencing a feeling that was turning his brain quite dizzy. To these neat tin people and those stiff paper houses he was as God! He was their universe. He swept them away at will. He was storm and disaster. He rebuilt them again with ease. He was resurrection and life. His word was law.

Romany had forgotten this childish play now as he had forgotten everything else concerned with himself, but often as he walked the twilight streets he felt again a sense of possession. He viewed beauties of architec-

ture with a tender warm perception. As he approached, lingered, and passed before some stately mansion, with its iron grill and glimpse of cool garden beyond, he experienced a distinct feeling of ownership. Had the master of the dwelling sauntered forth from his massive door it is very probable that Romany could have pointed out to him comeliness of detail in cornices, pilasters, stone balustrading, that he had not known were there.

Where Romany had secured his knowledge of the houses of many countries, that seemed lined in repetition along these streets, he did not know; but he did know that what the soul assimilates it has. Walking square after square with his intent eyes observing people, their habits, their characteristics, the homes they lived in, the boyhood feeling of possession recurred to him. There was an inner voice that told him that whatever he discovered of beauty was his, for to know beauty is to own it. The man who pays for works of art and has them carried to his galleries is not always the man who owns them, for in many cases he fails to appreciate their delicacy; their majesty; their exquisite line and color-

ing, and it is left to the modest friend, perhaps, who is invited to the gallery on Saturday afternoon, to gain possession of all the richness and glory there and to carry it away with him in his understanding mind where it wakes dreams and induces joy for many months or years. Knowledge and appreciation supply to man a wide deep peace that no caprice of fate can dim.

Romany sometimes had great moments when music scorched and burned his soul and passing over left a pleasant tang in his mouth like the sweet salt savor of sea weed on a night breeze, but music was a luxury his slender means did not permit of often.

In his walks Romany found that balconies held a particular fascination for him. If they overhung the street he would stop under them and gaze up rapturously. Sometimes they were wreathed with ivy; sometimes shaded lamps glowed from them; sometimes they were dark and silent, but whether of stone or stucco, whether spindled or latticed, they were magnets that drew him unerringly to gaze upward tranquilly spellbound.

He saw with pleasure the curve and mould-

ing of certain bricks. A detail, quietly appreciated, carried him back to some vast crisis in the affairs of men, and musing on an epoch he would sometimes turn to muse upon himself, and would wonder why he should so well remember the world's affairs and yet be so ignorant of his own.

Sauntering he read in the familiar house fronts about him a gripping and intensely human story of migrating peoples who had carried over the seas with them traditions of their own lands, and that they might not forget the old idols in a strange land they had erected door posts such as they had been accustomed to in the mother country. From these fragmentary revelations Romany patched grand tales of the struggle upward from barbarism to civilization's complexities. Through the many examples of architecture he read ignorance here and awakening there. Sometimes he wondered if he had been an architect himself, but he dismissed the thought, usually, with a smile that was tolerant of his own perplexities. No, he felt assured, whatever he had been he had not been that or this constant walking and studying of house fronts would

by now have brought him more perfect recollections. Perhaps he had had a friend, or a brother who was an architect, and perhaps for that reason the subject had interested him vitally and he had studied it painstakingly.

Today, the prolonged exertion of Romany's long walk had brought out the moisture on his brow and had given him a not unpleasant fatigue, a fatigue that tired his limbs while exhilarating his spirits.

He looked about for a place to rest, and presently took a short cut through a fashionable avenue and came out on upper Wells street where he found a cheap restaurant and entered it. Though it was mid-afternoon a crowd of noisy grimy men were lounging there . . . . loafers . . . . there was a particularly vociferous knot of these creatures in one corner. They were using coarse and horrid language, and to Romany's horror he presently discovered the object upon which their attention was focused.

That object was a slight and lovely faced child . . . . a girl of, perhaps, fifteen. She stood at bay behind a sloppy counter filling empty glasses and fighting off rough and

grotesque faces. Romany's height made it easily possible for him to look over the heads of the men, and for the girl to see him. Just as a crafty looking fellow made a particularly offensive advance she suddenly called aloud to Romany:

"Come and get me!"

Romany stood still. His face was impassive. He was studying the child's frightened eyes and the faces leering about her. Again she called to him:

"Come and get me!"

There was desperation in the tone.

Romany got her. He strode to the end of the counter, reached across, and lifted her up, placed her on the floor of the restaurant. The knot of men drew back, astonished. Again that same unnamed mysterious strength and power that had held off the fighting beasts on the night when he and Toy had invaded the slums was exerted.

"I want to go away from here!" begged the child.

"I'll take you home."

"Ain't got none!"

"Where do you live?"

"Nowheres!"

"Where did you sleep last night?"

"Under the counter on a rag rug."

"Where were you before you came here?"

"In another grease joint like this. I was brung up in an orphan asylum, but when I got big enough to work I had to hike to make room for more what was coming."

"Get your hat."

"My hair is all the lid I got!"

"Do they owe you anything here?"

"Naw—I smashed three days wages when I let a tray of glasses fly at a Swede this morning."

Romany took the child's arm and they left the restaurant. He had not regaled himself with the promised glass of milk and sandwich, but the child's predicament had wiped these lesser matters from his mind. There was only one thing to do and he did it. He took her to Toy.

"Talk it over with Mrs. Sude, will you please? She can direct us to some person or persons who will be able to handle the situation."

When Romany came the following day it

was to find that the little girl had not been disposed of but instead had been bathed, clothed and made neat and shining. Toy had had a long talk with her and the next morning had taken her to a barber shop where her untidy braids had been clipped and the short hair curled into a soft halo.

"I'm going to let her stay here and earn her way by taking care of my rooms—dusting, getting breakfast and supper and keeping the studio in some semblance of order. She interests me very much."

"Splendid!" cried Romany.

"She dances charmingly. From the little exhibition she gave me last night in her ill-fitting dress and coarse shoes I almost suspect she has talent of an unusual sort. Her language is the most outrageous I have ever heard. I shall enjoy training her. It will be a new experience. There is a great deal to be done, but there is splendid material to work with."

"Of course I had no idea of fastening her upon you when I brought her yesterday."

"I know that—it is purely my wish."

"What is her name? In the hurry and

flurry of rescue I forgot to inquire yesterday."

"The name she had at the orphanage was Chick Jones. There was no record of a father nor mother. She was left in a basket beside an ash can in an alley. They called her 'Chick' because she was so tiny and her fluff of yellow hair gave her the appearance of a newly hatched baby chick."

Romany laughed and then looked solemn. "Poor little mite!"

Toy opened the door into the studio and called to Chick. She came, running, and Romany gasped with astonishment. She was not at all the forlorn looking little being he had rescued. She was sweet and radiant and clean as a flower after a bath of dew. The delicate rose of her cheeks that had been dimmed and almost obliterated by grime and dirt glowed with a lovely clearness. Her stringy hair had been cut into a short becoming bang across her forehead and the cropping at the back and sides revealed two tiny ears and a slender pretty neck. Her eyes were dark and luminous—cool gray-blue with dilated pupils, and long black fringe that lay

in an upward curve on her cheek. Her teeth had been brushed and her legs had been encased in white stockings that ended in neat canvas shoes.

"Why, child!" Romany exclaimed, holding both her arms wide and surveying her from head to foot, "Miss Toy has transformed you!"

"Ain't she though! And I won't be Jones any more now. Jones and a pink gingham dress and bobbed hair like actresses got on the billboards—them things don't hitch together!"

"No?" Romany looked interested, so Chick continued:

"While I was waiting in the dentist's to get my teeth cleaned this morning, I saw a swell name across the street on a restaurant window. It was—Lelewar—so I'm gonna call myself Chick Lelewar from now on."

"Well, I see no objection to that," Romany acquiesced gravely, "do you, Toy?"

"None whatever."

The child bounded up merrily clapping her hands and catching Toy about the waist.

"There's a pretty bottle of pink perfume in

your room—kin I have a few drops?" she asked excitedly.

"You mean the rose toilet water, I suppose, —why, yes, you may have some if you like—"

Chick danced away to come back in a few moments with the bottle held carefully in both hands. She gave it to Toy.

"Please pour a little on my head."

Toy looked mystified.

"I want to be baptised with my new name."

"If you fasten this stately surname upon yourself you must also fasten upon yourself a determination to improve your speech—will you do that?" Romany asked.

"Sure, I'll do anything you want me to."

So the toilet water was poured on, and the grimy sad little Chick Jones, butt and target of rough, uncouth loungers and loafers, was no more, but in her place stood an affectionate jubilant child whose heart was opening to love as a flower opens to the sun.

The ceremony over, Romany was divided between two interests.

"I wonder whether I had better give you an English lesson right now, Miss Lelewar, or whether I had better go into the studio and

finish a bit of carpentering I have commenced there."

This sudden ascension into a world of lovely things and gracious people had thrown Chick's odd little mind into a blurred confusion of happiness. She wanted to answer Romany politely, and with the same good will in which he had accosted her. She cast about in her mind for some suitable reply that would be both friendly and unassertive; she remembered an expression much in vogue in the restaurant; an expression that had always seemed to convey the acme of good humored tolerance toward the affairs of others. She looked at Romany and said sweetly:

"Do as you damn please!"

CHAPTER XV

TOY and Chick passed magic hours together. Hours filled with household duties, dancing, modeling, laughter and songs.

While Toy sewed under the tall candles that were ranged in buff coverings along the walls Chick practiced new, steps skimming lightly back and forth across the long room with airy grace.

Romany had interested the director of the studio in the child and she had been given small parts to play. Aside from the meagre sum this enabled her to earn it proved a greater benefit in another way. She found a warm and interested friend in a dancer who volunteered to teach her during her engagement at the picture studio. Before the actors were ordered "on set" Chick and the little dancer would scamper away to a screened corner and go through a daily lesson. Chick progressed rapidly and proved Toy true in supposing that she had an unusual gift.

At home, in Toy's drawing room, Chick moved the heavy chairs, pulled the rugs aside, and turned into a chubby kneed sprite who pirouetted with mad abandon in thin silk trunks. She was as quick gestured and eager motioned as life itself. Her delicately rounded form pulsated with the joy snatched from these dear hours that were drained to the last sweet drop of happiness. Her grace, her lightness, her undulating shoulders and hips, her white arms, glowed and gleamed like a torch of youth. She was as unconsciously seductive and alluring as a bouquet of spring flowers still dewy in their freshness, and she was like a battery of steel springs, the former qualities constantly exchanging courtesies with the latter.

Behind these joyful hours of expression under Toy's interested gaze, there lay the other hours that stand so solidly behind a dancer's art. Hours of tedious technique undergone without the inspiring spur of spirited music; hours of breathlessness; paradoxical hours of straining for ease; working for the solidity of the beautiful arabesque that bears in its light grace the image of unearthly

lightness; hours of backache; sore muscles; bruised toes aching a way through to hardness.

Mrs. Sude had presented Chick with a slightly worn evening gown of shimmering green to be made over into a costume. Chick sat all through a sunny afternoon slashing and basting and had emerged before Toy's astonished eyes in the evening like a palely tinted flower swaying in its calyx. She had snipped and snipped until she had devised an abbreviated garment that had a hundred fluttering points each point softened into fringe at the edge.

The silk was of so sheer and soft a quality that Chick's smooth skin gleamed through only a brief portion of it obscured by the tiny satin trunks. As she swept forward, stretched backward, whirled and gyrated; as she appealed heavenward, bowed earthward, her honey colored hair floated in a drift of waving warmth, and her wide oddly shaped eyes sparkled furiously.

"My costume looks like a puree of green peas—doesn't it?" she called to Toy as she flew round to her side of the room.

"I was thinking how much your skin looks like cream of roses."

A busy and momentous day finally came around. Chick had secured a week's engagement at a small theatre. She was sewing at the wide window in the living room bent eagerly over yards of fluffy corn colored chiffon that she was fashioning into a new costume. The sun poured in to add to the effulgence of her hair as the whirring wheels traveled seam after seam leaving a fine trail of silken stitches in the shimmering material that billowed and clouded about her.

Toy was sprinkling the plants and straightening her books and jars of flowers before going into the studio to work. She opened the hall door in response to the postman's ring thinking she might find a note from Romany in the old fellow's outstretched hand. Romany had a way of sending her a line very often when he missed seeing her for some reason. Sometimes he sent a bit of verse; sometimes a terse humorous description of something he had seen at the picture studio or on the street. The spirit of effervescent comradeship that ran between them gave rise to many light quick interminglings that passing

between their perfectly attuned souls strengthened their harmony.

Upon opening the door and looking into the hall Toy greeted the old postman:

"Good morning—you are early."

"Folks don't have so much mail once the bills are distributed."

Toy received from him a little circular setting forth the merits of a new neighborhood café. Behind the postman, standing in an attitude of uncertainty that seemed to be holding him in the hallway when he should have preferred to be gone by the quizzical expression of his face, Toy saw a tall well built young man. He touched his coat graciously in the region of his heart with his soft felt hat and smiled. Toy smiled in return and spoke:

"Can I be of any assistance to you?"

"I am now leaving, M'damoiselle. I came to discover would Madame Sude direct me to some lady who would acquaint me with some various customs of thees country and help me to improve my speech. But she inform she cannot. I have ze hardmost time finding propraire friend. One man—two man—I

know where I work, but their language is vera wrong."

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled again.

"Won't you come in a moment?"

Toy held open the door to her rooms. The young man advanced, saw Chick sitting like a busy fairy enveloped in her golden cloud, smiled again and entered. He approached the table and laying his hat on a pile of magazines took a blank paper from his pocket. With the Frenchman's tender perception and gratefulness for the slightest kindness he was fairly bubbling with satisfaction. He looked fixedly at Toy for several seconds, then bending above the table sent his pencil dashing over the square of paper. He wrote two words in the corner of the square, straightened his shoulders, bowed and presented the page to Toy.

"My card — M'damoiselle."

He had drawn a picture of her. It was delicately and gracefully done. The sureness of its suggestion in brief lines and whirls attested the practiced hand. Under it was written — Jean Chatellard.

"Thank you, M'sieur Chatellard. Will you sit down and tell me something of your difficulty here in a strange country?"

"Ah, Madame, I, myself, consist my beegest difficulty. Madame Sude say to me—'Why you not teach Spanish, Italian, French, or translate or do somsing propaire? I cannot meet you togesser wiz my friends when you perseest in so low a work!'—but I must perseest, Madame; I am working for ze great purpose."

"And that purpose?"

"Oh, Madame, dare I tell you first where I work? But, yes, I tell you! I am in one beeg resturong—a cooook! A chef! I make beautiful cakes in an atmosphere like support ze devil in his regions. I make there much salary for one propaire reason."

"Yes?"

"My inventions! Cartoons I have drawn always in my own country, but they are air—they are observe—they are passé. Now I live my life to draw my inventions on papaire—inventions to help the man who toil—who sweat—who will find more leisure because I first find it for him and catch it on papaire and then in iron and steel."

"I think that is very splendid. You have ambition and courage. I quite admire you for doing the work that will take you by the swiftest route to the end you are striving to accomplish. I know of some one who will help you with your English, and I shall be glad to have you come here to see us at any time you wish."

He was young and though his frame was huge, he trembled and flushed as happily as a boy at Toy's words.

"Those with whom I work zey can only remember me for a cooook—those with whom I do not work zey cannot forget I am ze cooook! But you—you will see me as Jean Chatellard, a person who have arrive in thees wonderful land of opportunity—to rise—to go forward—to mak, from nossing—somsing!"

Toy looked into his eager expectant face and found herself drawn to him tremendously. She knew Romany would like him.

She showed him through the studio and he exclaimed with pleasure over her half finished work. He stood a long time before the face of Romany that was developing slowly from

the mass of clay. He bent over it and studied it carefully.

"Madame, you are a personage — I intrude upon greatness. You have here in this face the beginnings of a countenance of powaire — the face of a great soul — do you imagine it, or does he, perhaps, live?"

"That," smiled Toy, "is your future English teacher."

"Then shall I be a lagging pupil that I may look long at so wonderful a visage. It strike me with much force."

Chick danced for Jean Chatellard and he chatted merrily with her. Their chattering became so vivacious and Chick's raw slang was so ludicrous contrasted with Jean's perfect politeness voiced in imperfect English, that Toy was obliged to turn her back upon them and smile quietly.

Jean went away happy as a lark. At parting he said:

"I have now what mak ze whole world bright — friends! My courage enter — I succeed!"

"Good! Come whenever you can."

"Come soon!" called Chick.

"Ver soon — I promees — adieu."

In half an hour a messenger boy came stumbling up the steps and handed in a mammoth box of roses. Laid across their stems were two corsage bouquets of lavender sweet peas. Toy lifted the roses from the box and well understood their fragrant eloquent message from a heartsick lad who had at last found the peace of understanding friendliness.

His address was on the pretty note he had enclosed with the flowers. When Romany came that evening Toy told him about the boy.

"His eyes snap and his hands are washed clean," supplied Chick. "To be a chef ain't — isn't — half so bad as to be a soup man — that's regular terrible — a soup man cooks nitro glycerine for the yeggs that blows safes. I had flowers from one once, but it seems to me a chef is real genteel."

Toy and Romany exchanged a glance over the child's head that was both pitying and amused.

Romany hunted the boy up the next day and brought him to Toy's studio to supper.

"So —" exclaimed Jean upon hearing of

Chick's sudden appearance there only a short time before his own advent, "so—zey have found you, too!"

He looked over Chick's bent shoulders with benign tenderness toward Toy.

"We are now a fine family—a family with many talent!"

There was at Toy's table an element that brought to the gatherings there the festive quality of a fête; enthusiasm ran high; enthusiasm with its varied and deep pulsations stirred between the four oddly assorted friends and kept their eyes and faces eager, joyous, alert.

Chick was bending every effort to improve her speech; to learn; to progress from her homely chrysalis state. Romany was living to regain his health and his memory. Jean was filled with the ardor of dreams that were to be made over into practical helps for tired humanity and Toy lived to help these other three realize their ambitions. The current of their lives flowed in and out of her cheery quarters. She provided haven and they had come to cast anchor in the beautiful harbor of her love.

Jean Chatellard was tall and graceful. In repose his body fell into easy pleasing lines that suggested a vitality constantly curbed, but always ready to spring into sudden action. His was that acme of charming gracefulness that combines power of muscle and sinew with the simple ease and freedom of motion following poise of mind and heart as well.

He had been a wrestler, a traveler, a thinker, a doer. His clear cool eyes had a steady beam with an overtone of mischief and gayety. His mouth denoted character of an unusual sort; full, with almost the fullness of sensuousness it was caught firmly at the corners so that instead of spreading into vacuity it rounded into a tender sympathetic curve, beautifully molded into lines of sweetness, never seen in wholly sensuous lips; his teeth were white and his upper lip touched with blue black.

Jean's slogan, his watchword, the sentence he had pronounced upon himself were embodied in the few words he had uttered, feelingly, shortly after his acquaintance with Toy:

"Madame, I have great wish to rise!"

He bent every ounce of his energy and will toward accomplishing that end. Even during his hours of leisure and relaxation he watched, studied, absorbed those things that were worthy about him. He made quick careful selections, dropping whatever was not of use to himself and making his own those things, actions and ambitions that would serve to send him along his way. This network of small quiet discardings and keepings was the ground work upon which a man of worth was being slowly reared.

Chick was the first to notice the significance of his salutations and leave takings.

"Say, did you notice," she asked Toy, "that Jean never says, 'good night' or 'good bye' to us when he leaves?"

"I do not know that I had noticed it, child."

"Well, he says something different."

"What does he say—something in French, perhaps—I had not noticed."

"He finds out first when he is to see us again, and then instead of saying, 'good bye' as we do and finishing everything off with a bang like life was over for a few hours, he

says, 'Tomorrow!' 'Tonight!' 'On Tuesday!' 'In the morning!' just like he was carrying us with him all the time, not as if he said 'good bye' and laid us down and then came around next day and picked us up again. He goes away and he says, 'Tomorrow!' and our friendship stretches right along through the night till we meet again. After 'Good bye' a guy could go away and never come back. It's a cold, dead word, but when a guy says, 'Tomorrow!' he's got to come back. It's a promise!"

"Promise is a very good word to use in connection with Jean," Romany interjected. "He is what is called a man of promise—in embryo—he has gifts. It will always be tomorrow with Jean. He will never look back nor spend his days in idle regrets. He has a sturdy spirit and he is building carefully and well. You have found the word that exactly expresses his exuberant, expanding personality."

Many a night after that Toy and Romany smiled quietly to each other as Chick followed Jean to the door and they heard her odd little voice calling to him and caught the boom of

Jean's answer, "Tomorrow!" as it came ringing back through the night to the little girl in the doorway who so well understood his loneliness and his joy at finding surcease in companionship.

It became a regular thing on Sunday for Jean to cook the dinner. He and Chick would make a Saturday excursion to the vegetable markets, and return with greens and the materials for the concocting of delectable salads. Romany would bring a chicken or a duck and there would be a great scrambling about as Jean with his sleeves rolled to the elbow and one of Toy's aprons tied about his neck directed Chick, who was an able and willing assistant. Toy and Romany sometimes went to church; sometimes read aloud in the studio, and when the dinner was finally prepared and set on the table the consuming of it stretched far into the afternoon as there was much banter and lively repartee.

There was a throb and a pulse in Romany's voice that touched his listeners' hearts like the beat and throb of smooth majestic music. Whenever he stopped speaking it was as if

they had been let down from an exalted state where poesy reigned.

Frequently Jean's effervescent comments cut across Romany's beautiful speech like lightning playing about a mountain top.

"I had so hard a ze time coming out from New York to here. I ask agent de police—Where ess ze Ponslvana staton?"

"He return, 'Whadja soy?'"

"I repeat."

"He say, 'You Greeks make me seek.'"

"I no Greek—I Frenchman."

"'Well, I canno get you!'"

"Where, I repeat raising voice to bellow, where ess Ponslvanastaton?"

"Finally I go away and my frien' who spik only French he say to me, 'Come on ze pavement. If you wish to converse with thees polissman you must follow first rule of American conversation. I suggest tobac in mouth.'"

"So I hurry to a store. I buy instead of tobac a package of gum. I put four sticks in my mouth and return. I chew loudly and comment, Say, where ess Ponslvanastaton?"

"'Oh, right around ze corner,' he reply!"

Jean sighed dismally, then brightened as

he looked at the laughing faces surrounding him.

"I have first thing a fearful time. All English sound like parrots talking through telephone."

"Well, it won't be long before you are one of us. You learn quickly and you observe."

Romany laid his hand on Jean's shoulder. He felt a deep and unaccountable liking for the lad, almost as if he were his own. To Romany there were no classes nor divisions of peoples in the world other than two—people with ideals and people without.

"You have great ambition, lad; that speaks for you when language fails."

"Ambition! I live for eet! I do not wish to die on ze third base!"

One afternoon Chick and Jean went to the art institute. Toy looked after the odd pair as they disappeared down the street. Jean was attired in a black and white checked suit, a rakish French hat perched above a red American tie. In his breast pocket a pongee handkerchief fluttered displaying with a careful carelessness his initials embroidered in blue on its corner. This was Chick's handi-

work and an arduous task it had been. But after pulling out the infinitesimal stitches time after time she had finally arrived at some semblance of the letters J. C. and Jean wore them as proudly as if they had been exquisitely accurate.

Chick was trim in a dark blue serge with rows and rows of tiny black buttons running up the seams and a cream colored filmy lace vest across her diminutive breast. Wisps of her honey colored hair escaped the broad rim of her black sailor and brushed Jean's arm just above his elbow as he sauntered along in his gracefully elegant style and she trotted beside him.

"Gee! but you are huge, Jean."

"Huge? It mean what?"

"Large—big—tremendous."

"Oh, and you, you are so high as my heart!"

"Wish I could grow a couple of inches, say, so's I could see you smile easier. Hang it! Why was I made so sawed off!"

"I would have nossing add to you, M'damoiselle. Can colors be add to ze rainbow, or witchery to ze velvet night?"

"Hot air!"

"Mees Chick, I immolate my speerit on ze altar of your sweetness!"

Chick's eyes grew large. The habitual look of scepticism in them passed into one of deep satisfaction. She caught her breath and made a whispered rejoinder:

"Hell! Ain't that pretty!"

Her upturned face was angelic and rapturous. In the ecstasy of the moment she was totally unconscious of having descended into her former degradation of speech. Jean looked at her in stupefied wonder, then turned his head away to break into a broad grin. He caught her tiny hand in his and pressed it warmly.

"You are my good friend."

"Sure!"

"And Mees Toy—she is my wonderful friend—my savior—her smile drench my soul with moonlight."

"There's nobody like her in all the world—not on islands or on mountains or in castles."

"No," Jean replied, "only once in a generation is such a woman made. She will someday be ver great—you shall see—she

walk on earth, but her soul is in the sky—other women talk and chatter while she dream—and what it is she dream you and I will someday know. Che sarà, sarà!"

"Huh?"

"What will be, will be."

"And Mr. Romany—he dreams too."

"Often—most time—yes, he dream, but his mind ees wrap with cloud too much—it ees sad—but, maybe, sometime—who know? Life has, perhaps, use Mr. Romany hard. Nature demand always that after fatigue one must rest; perhaps loss of memory is but intense desire upon ze part of nature to sleep deep and secure nourishment. We have in my country an old proverb—'Qui dort dîne'—"

"Huh?"

"Who sleeps dines!"

They swung on happily together.

"Ah! We have arrive!"

Jean's gentle touch on Chick's small elbow sent her bounding up the broad gray steps of the art institute. She looked about her in a hesitant awe struck fashion.

"I never was into a place like this before.

It's nice and clammy and solemcholy in here ain't—isn't it, Jean? Oooooh! all the statues look as if they was getting ready for a swim. Ain't police nuts? I saw 'em pinch a poor banana cart guy for taking off his shirt on the street 'cause the weather was ninety-eight and in here where it's cool all these marble folks sit around like Adam's side kick and nobody says nothing. My! this fellow has grand legs—why do they sculp all their statues without coats and pants?"

"Well, Mees, ze artist have always ze appraising eye—ze eye zat see under mantles and folds of silk to ze straight or crooked limb beneat. A woman moving from chair to table is to some person merely a woman moving from chair to table—bouleversement—to ze artist she is perfection or imperfection—her walk it ees one graceful undulation or one awkward sinewy progress."

"Do I walk all right, Jean?"

"You—you swim in ze air—you float like light leaf on ze stream. Walking ees not so much a matter of prepare in ze head as ze unconscious fitting of all parts of the frame perfectly one into another. Ze perfect body have rhythm of motion."

"Why do so many artists have scandals about 'em in the newspapers?"

"Ze man inspired by beauty is on a quest that nevaire end. To-day one face is heaven —it inspire—it drive ze artist to perform extraordinaire work and tomorrow it ees forgotten and his eye have run elsewhere. His whole life is but ze quest for beauty and when he have found beauty in one plais he presently seeeek it in anozzer . . . . and anozzer . . . . and anozzer for zair is not end to beauty . . . . it stretch on forever."

Chick looked solemn and walked about surveying various marbles and bronzes with puzzled gaze.

"Somebody lies, Jean."

"You mean what?"

"I mean if it's all right for these marble fellows not to wear clothes then it must be all wrong for us to wear them. On one side of this street the windows are full of taffeta dresses at $37.50 and on the other side they sit in this museum undressed and haughty like clothes were bad."

"You propound terreeble question. Zoes wizzout knowledge often ask questions for

which ze wisest can find no ansaire. Who can tell zese thing? Myself I believe ze savage who sit in hees skin ees more decent than ze rich man who load himself witz how you call gew gaws. If you woke on desert island tomorrow you would think no more of silk dresses and purple umbrella—you would think deeper thought. It is true zis great building mak eternal grimace at population swarming opposite side of street—it ees ze silent war between commercialism and idealism."

"Are you happy in this building, Jean?"

"Oui, vraiment—I come often here to dream to forget ze steam of ze stews and broths—to withdraw from chatter and fuss. Zere are here no sign to tell me buy this, buy zat—no great red letters screech at me chew gum, smoke cigar, travel on railway, take turkish bath, build garage, wear silk garter, eat soup, purchase stocks, ride in motor, wear overshoes and diamonds. C'est bien dommage!—zese large advertising sign on street are but ink and paper shepherd calling to ze sheep."

Jean shrugged his shoulders as if casting the

obnoxious blatancy of modern advertising from his consciousness.

"Nossing speak to me here but silence and once one has heard ze clear voice of silence all sound else dwindle to insignificance. There is no sublimity in noise and at the hub of civilization is only noise and friction—the friction of million lives wearing out in grind—I sorrow for them—and so for humanity I think long thoughts that I may build machine to help them work less and earn more."

They went upward and viewed the paintings, ascending into the calm cool light, hand in hand.

"Does everyone here know all about art like you do, Jean?"

"I know nossing—all I know ees zat I do not know. But watch and see what zese others know."

Knots of curious people grouped themselves before various paintings.

"See what zey do!" Jean pointed in scorn at a group of half dozen men and women who were being herded through the gallery.

"Zey come to picture—zey say 'What it ees?' 'Ed, do you think maybe it ees a well

on ze farm or an old man drinking cider?—one hardly know thees day—but ze color ees grand.' Zey look one minute at picture zen hunt fifteen minutes in catalog. 'Ah, here it ees, Ed—number 168—Coast of Maine—so much for zat.' Round ze room zey go and always zay look in book for numbers and name of artist and price of picture but ze picture hanging before ze eye zey disregard. When zey return home zey know no word of what ze artist have said on canvas, ze only know zey have found in ze book numbers 169, 201, 345 and many more. It is pitiful!"

"Oh, Jean, look here quick. Tell me what can this picture mean—all this white of egg piled up with vanilla streaks through it?"

"It is by Chicago artist. It is a crime against nature disguise under name of modern. Newspaper applaud it and find worth behind it—many persons wrangle over what it can mean—zey find in it allusions to zis, allusions to zat—zey think it portrays revolution in China or growth of ze race or herd of zebras in pain and one day millionaire pay twenty thousand dollar to hang zis pussle picture in his gallery and artist sit home

and laugh and wipe his brushes on anozzer canvas and call it Descent of Reason and again newspapers howl and crowds congregate and zey tear each other to bits telling what picture means and again artist closes one eye and laugh for picture means nossing—and so it goes. It is joke artist plays on public, but it is a bitter one."

"What's this sample of white wash mean, Jean?"

"Ha!—ha! Comment! Vous me surprenez! It is a mountain and clouds!"

He drew her to a large canvas.

"Here is the work of my countrywoman—so fine a portrayal of ze cows and ze veals!"

"Oh!—Oh! Jean! Now I can laugh at you! Calves, not veals."

"So—I stand correct."

In the rooms where older and steadier examples of art were exhibited they revealed in the pictured realities.

"Here ees wool on zese sheeps zat ees wool!" Jean commented proudly as if eschewing all moderns and linking himself indefatigably with the solid achievements of other years.

"Gosh! don't it look soft and warm, and dirty—just like some wool I saw once in a bunch of sheep in a cattle car down to the stock yards."

"And here ees flesh just like ours—no one need to guess ees eet skin or ees eet rubber tubing."

"Here is one called 'The Hermit.' He looks cross and ugly. What's a hermit?"

"Hermit is sour person who have given up all hope of broadness to concentrate his powers on intensity. He lives most often from tin cans. He tries to dodge life."

"I don't get you, Jean. How can a guy dodge life when he's got to live it every day?"

"Well, then, he dodge those question life raises. If one deny life one become warped. If one accept immediately it become bewilderingly complex."

"Deep stuff."

"If one live neatly, aesthetically, but unsatisfiedly one wears mask of faint discontent. If one take so call 'fling' mask drop away and drove of gnat attack inquiring face. Bah! Let us look and think no further. Let us instead go out of here and seek ice cream soda."

"Sure, that sounds good to me."

CHAPTER XVI

FROM the dark street the inscrutable eyes of destiny looked in toward the mellow light in Toy's living room; eyes half sad; half joyful; eyes mistily veiled that answered no questions but propounded problems. To-night destiny did more than look in. She came in, lured perhaps by Chick's violet scarf with its delicate boning that billowed and curled as she swept through the shadowy rooms in the cobwebby symbolism of a scarf dance. Lured perhaps by Toy's laugh and applause as they broke in gay response to Chick's exquisite abandon, destiny smiling fixedly advanced and rang the front doorbell and stood disclosed there in the huge person of one Flora McAlpine.

Flora was a friend of Mrs. Sude's who since the arrival of the very charming Romany into the former's home circle wandered in and out frequently. Flora had passed from the clinging vine state to that last state of the persistent and lonely female — adhesiveness. She was a

great scow of a woman so overlaid with fatty excrescences and protuberances as to have digressed very far from the original ground plan of a human. Her head was large and her eyebrows were beetling and of the same stiff iron grayness as her upstanding hair. A large and unsymmetrical wart flourished brazenly on her determined chin; her hands were pudgy and fidgety and her voice was deep and unpleasantly harsh. Flora held a position with a charitable organization and charity was practiced both ways, in her case as during her dispensing of it she was tolerated by the organization and pitied because she was the bedraggled descendant of an ancient and honorable line.

Flora labored in the department in which cast off clothes were solicited from citizens over the telephone, received and sorted. When choice bits floated into view on the tops of the heaps of ragged, faded, worn and out of date apparel Flora appropriated them to herself. This accounted for her fantastic and unconventional appearance. But whatever might be hung about the soiled and grimy upstanding levers of a scow in the way of colored

scarfs, and mantles of plush it still remained a scow built for back waters, dull ditches, the sooty settlings of the rear doors of life that backed down to its sluggish course.

Flora's unprepossessing outward appearance put no check, however, on her kittenish heart. Since the appearance of Romany this heart had caused her much uneasiness. She had talked to him on a number of occasions in Mrs. Sude's house. In his gentle way Romany had performed such small acts of courtesy as opening doors for her, placing a chair, getting her wrap when she felt chilly, fanning her when she felt warm and one night he had accompanied her to her house to carry a burden of half a dozen books. Flora's heart had lashed itself into a tempestuous state. Poor silly old scow that yearned for the feel and thrill of tossing water when it was tied up in dry dock. Flora invited Romany to her old, musty house; wrote to him; sent him boxes of crumby cake; knitted slippers for him and embroidered his initials on silk handkerchiefs.

Then one evening she told him that she realized his strained financial condition made

it impossible for him to declare himself and that being a modern woman, to say nothing of a business woman with a love of plain speaking, she would assume her prerogative and do the proposing.

"I have an awful large house, you know, and I need a man in it—a house is so creepy and lonesome especially in thunder storms at night without a man around!"

"You quite overwhelm me, Miss McAlpine!"

"Oh, don't feel that way about it. You'd be doing me a favor. I liked you from the first. I'm sure I'd be proud to be your wife."

Romany gasped.

"It is most kind. I scarcely know in what words to decline so generous an offer. I could not force my unworthiness on any woman else my last vestige of honor should descend to join the general wreck which is myself. May I hope that, instead, we may go on being friends throughout the years to come. I should much like to feel that I had won a staunch friend—one who cared a little about so unworthy a fellow as myself simply through understanding my lost hold on things."

But in declining Flora's offer of marriage Romany hadn't won a friend. He had procured an enemy, an enemy who worked in slippery mysterious ways digging about daily in the undercurrents of the city's poor with a systematic and grim determination to have revenge on the kindly man who had simply tried to show her ordinary courtesy. Flora knew the lack of continuity in Romany's past as it was known to Toy. She began investigations going back through dilapidated books of the charitable organization and enlisting the assistance of a stout sentimental old chap attached to the government service who was glad to dig about in musty records of unsavory characters to win a warm meal at Flora's spotted tablecloth and a snooze before her draughty fireplace which was to him better than no fireplace at all. Upon the combined findings of this old fellow's and her own Flora presently threw all fairness and charity to the winds as does many a jealous woman.

Tonight she broke in on Toy's happy companionship with Chick with a death sentence to Romany's peace on her lips. After her knock on the door and the consequent dis-

closure of her massive form in the doorway, Toy invited her into the studio. She seated herself ponderously in a chair and looked up at a beautiful misty lantern Romany had hung just the night before above Toy's palms and flowering plants. It was as delicate as a film of sea water caught up into a glistening globule and it swung by a silken cord among a bower of tropic leaves clashing and murmuring in the insweep of the lake breeze through the open window.

"I don't want to cause any trouble," Flora squawked in her unpleasant voice, immediately setting about in her next statement to cause all she possibly could, by supplementing her remark with,

"Mr. Romany isn't the person you think he is!"

"Why, I don't think he's anybody in particular except just the quiet, kindly, courteous man I see from day to day."

"Humph!" snorted Flora swelling in the region of her great chest, palpitating and nearly bursting through her flimsy waist in the excitement consequent upon her forthcoming disclosure.

"Well, if you want to know, he's got a bad record! I've looked him up. He's nobody for decent people to associate with. In the first place he's pretending to you he can't remember his name and his past history. Stuff! Nonsense! Rats! He's forgotten on purpose. He's cultivated one of those convenient automatic forgetteries. I've seen 'em before. Any man would want to forget it if he had run off from a wife and six children to tag around the country with a girl off the streets. He got tired of her, too, and left her the same way. Beside that he took some money that didn't belong to him. My advice to you is to stop his hanging around here."

Toy arose. She was very pale. Her lips trembled and the room receded before her dazed eyes, grew dim, disappeared in blackness and then suddenly returned in bald detail. She spoke and her voice reached her own ears as if it were whistling down in thin tones from a distant mountain top.

"To me Mr. Romany's word is beyond question. His character is one of rare fineness. He is a man whom to know is to trust.

He is incapable of any act of injustice or unkindness."

Flora McAlpine snorted. "Women in love are always blind as bats."

Toy felt weak and sat down quickly. In spite of her valiant defense of Romany she was overpowered by the horrible thought that some of this fantastic tale might be true. Had he not said himself that perhaps he was a wife-beater and a moral leper?

"If he's the person I'm pretty certain he is, the federal authorities are after him too. I've talked to their investigator. They are looking for a man who just answers his description."

With this last shot Flora heaved forward in her chair preparatory to rising.

Chick crossed over and flung open the door onto the street.

"Go home!" she screamed in a high breathless note. "If you liked us or Mr. Romany you wouldn't say such things. You're mean as the devil!"

"Oh, Chick, dear,—that dreadful word again—you mustn't say it, child!" Chick paid no attention to Toy's gentle reproof, but instead she hustled Flora's bulk out onto the

street and shut the door with a resounding slam shutting the horrid evil face out into the dark.

"She *is* mean as the devil! I'll tell everybody in the world she is. If our beautiful Mr. Romany goes to jail what in the world will we do!" Chick fell sobbing on the floor, her slim little shoulders heaving in a tumult of grief and rage. Toy slipped down beside her and gathered the odd child into her warm arms, soothing the short bright hair with slow tender strokes. She stared above her head onto the dark patch of street visible from the open window. No matter where one went in the world unhappiness hunted one out. . . . . Flora's belligerent voice and her mocking eyes would follow her day in and day out. . . . . Flora's accusations . . . . Flora's wagging tongue that would pour this tale broadcast to be caught up and twisted and painted into the most lurid shades . . . . just ten minutes talk in a rocking chair and Flora had wrecked her world and Romany's . . . . but had she? . . . . was Flora big as the horizon though so generously proportioned . . . . had destiny really appointed her a spokesman

or had she simply interfered where she had no right . . . . could one still go on beyond these things . . . . could one progress in the face of so terrible an obstacle as the blanching of faith . . . . could one still go on when the foundation was swept away . . . . when for the third time the building and rearing and honest laboring of days and months was trampled underfoot . . . . could one . . . . was it humanly possible . . . . from across the dark street came the answer . . . . a man at a switch somewhere turned it on and it leaped out from an oblong sign board in tall gold letters on a blue ground . . . . framed in white light the answer of a great city that had once been swept into the dust by flame and smoke called to one of its mourning children in a voice of inexhaustible strength and pride . . . . "I triumphed over ruin. I am Chicago, the youngest large city and the largest young city in the world. I pump more fresh water per capita than any other city on earth. From a straggling settlement in the wilderness I have come to lead the world in the distribution of grain, lumber, clothing, meat and live stock, electrical and gas devices,

dry goods, general merchandise, machinery, jewelry, pianos, automobiles, household requisites, gasoline and kerosene for domestic purposes, iron and steel products, furniture, paints and varnish, tobacco, copper, tin and sheet iron products, cement, confectionery, leather work, electrical machinery, equipment for heating and ventilating service, railway cars and millinery.

"I have the greatest number of parks and playgrounds of any city in the world. I have two hundred and seven large and small parks, forty-five of which contain well-equipped playgrounds, seventy special municipal playgrounds, and twelve public bathing beaches, which register an annual attendance of over forty million visitors.

"Over my surface lines that cover more than one thousand miles of track three and a half million passengers are handled daily.

"I have a telephone for every five persons —which is more than are to be found in the continents of Asia, Africa and South America put together. I have 1,922,971 miles of telephone wire—sufficient to encompass the earth at the equator seventy-six times. If my tele-

phone calls for one day were formed into one continuous call, it would consume twelve years."

Impossible to droop and fail surrounded by this virile spirit, Toy gathered Chick from the floor and carried her to bed. Hope—the city offered her that; out of its sturdy bluff heart it sent a clear call. From her pillows as she closed her eyes Toy looked appreciatively at a group of public buildings that rose against the sober sky cut into sharp relief by the high full moon. She fell asleep to awaken a few moments later in a trembling state of dread. A night bird trailed his mournful note across the heavens cleaving the silence from star to star.

Toy sat up and holding her arms toward Romany who was cut off from her by the darkness of intervening squares she cried to him:

"I shall believe in you—sick or well, rich or poor, in jail or out."

CHAPTER XVII

"I GOTTA ask a question!" Chick came close to Romany twisting her keen little face into distorted hesitancy. She followed her opening sentence with the repetition of one of Flora McAlpine's customarily tactless speeches:

"Miss McAlpine says if I'm gonna be a dancer I gotta have personality. She says I go slumping around when I'm not dancing in togs that are too tame. She says I oughta wear fancier clothes and get some real style. Whatda you think, Mr. Romany?"

Romany laughed. The kindly note in his expression of merriment gave it a soothing quality so that no matter what the situation on hand his understanding gayety seemed to overlay it with tender comprehension.

"It's a tremendous subject you've opened, child, but I'll try to give you my idea of personality and style."

"Thanks."

Chick drew an ottoman forward ana

dropped down close to Romany's knee, her chin on her slim little hand and her big eyes fastened adoringly on his face.

"Some modern poet has said that to the fur wrapped Eskimo and to the unclad savage style is an empty sound. To civilized peoples it seems a thing to strive for, buy for, die for. The other day I was accosted by one of the men in the house where I live who had just returned from the east. 'Hello,' he said to me, 'just view my togs, will you? See the latest thing in shoes?' He kicked out a strangely shapely boot; flapping back his overcoat he displayed a suit of blue and green broadly checked. He launched enthusiastically on the beauties of a satin vest, barred and cross-barred with threads of gold. A queer tie shrieked under an oddly winged collar. His hat spoke of an alien clime. Taken all in all his apparel had a feverish note. Mentally I saw the crowd from which he had lately come — Bohemians, Night-outers, Extremists. 'Hate to look like everybody else,' said this man to me, 'want to express personality and style!' I smiled wanly for it has always seemed to me that personality can only mean

the emanation of a rare fine essence from a well-stored mind and not the haphazard draping of arms and chests. In striving in lurid ways for personality people more often achieve merely eccentricity."

"You mean it don't get you nowhere no matter how much you load on the outside if there's nobody home in your brain?"

"That was my exact meaning in the piquant patois of your former realm. How about your lesson in English? Are you studying the exercises I gave you every day?"

"Yep—yessir—for an hour every morning after I get the dishes done."

"Jean will be getting ahead of you if you are not careful—you don't want him to speak your very own language better than you speak it yourself, do you?"

"Blamed right, I don't—nossir, I mean!"

They laughed and Chick bit her lips to punish herself for slipping into the old vulgar speech of the saloons and alleys.

"Now we'll attack the subject of style—in order to acquire style, my dear little bewildered Chick, you must first be introduced by the proper authorities, Knowledge and Dis-

crimination to the goddess Suitability and to old King Midas. In their dressmaking shop there is an air quite perfect. There is no hurry and flurry and dropping of pins; there are no harsh moments of indecision. In buying or trying a gown one is not so many feet high, nor pounds around, to be draped . . . . one is part of a picture upon which these artists create with the calm deep joy of genius. Here one does not merely procure lines from a fashion plate, nor silks from the far east, nor fur bands from the silent north country. Into every dainty rose and satin fold there is worked a beautiful philosophy of life. All the pretty things the goddess Suitability has read in faces and eyes and flowers she weaves into gowns. With deft touch she accentuates beauty and covers defects. One learns that exquisite apparel is not merely cut from bolts of cloth and fashioned with scissors and thread, but is the fruit of wide knowledge nurtured in a heart that is perpetually responsive."

"You mean a person's gotta have money to buy good clothes, and you mean if cloth costs ten dollars a yard and don't match a person's general make up it's all to the bad?"

"I think what he means, dear, down under all his pretty little make believe tale is that little girls like you need not bother their heads about style for a long, long time, not until they have become acquainted with many more important things."

But, having been set straight on that subject, Chick had still another perplexity.

"And now that that's settled, Mr. Romany, will you please tell me just what Bolshevists and I. W. W's are? They ain't in the dictionary nor the encyclopedia."

"Judging by the little knowledge which I have of them either a Bolshevist or an I. W. W. might be classed as a D. P. Now, to me, a D. P. is about the most sorry spectacle in the world. A D. P. does not count his blessings. He grumbles over what he has and eternally wishes for what he has not, which is a sad doctrine, indeed, calculated to upset the nerves and the digestion. A D. P. is not kind to his fellow men, nor thoughtful of his government; he is selfish, rude, stingy, foolish, dismal and unhappy. After you have talked to him ten minutes you wish you had gone down on the water front and sat alone instead.

The world is full of D. P's and they are a troublesome lot. Any wise person will let the D. P's alone and join the C. P's for they are a grand good order. I know many of them. They are happy and wise. If one becomes a C. P. one finds many other C. P's. It is the C. P's who must save our country from the I. W. W's, the Bolshevists and the D. P's!"

"Oh, Mr. Romany! Now you've puzzled me up worse than ever. I never heard of a D. P. nor a C. P."

"Well, then, I'll whisper the secret to you —a D. P. is a discontented person and a C. P. is a contented person."

Chick jumped from her ottoman and danced gaily over the soft rugs.

"Oh, Mr. Romany, you're just the most fun. You make everything in the world seem so interesting."

If Chick had confided her financial problems as well as her sociological problems to Romany she would not have been entangled in the embarrassing episode that was the result of her first entrance into a bank where she went to lay away the small sum she had saved from her earnings at the picture studio.

There are two noticeable things about women and banks. If a woman has no money in the bank she is constantly harassed by a desire to place some there; if she has some there she uses all possible speed to get it out.

Unaccountably she goes about the business of opening an account in strange and devious ways. Perhaps she approaches the square-chested doorman and inquires in a sepulchral key as to the cost of placing money in the bank, and whether she must wait till she is twenty-one before she can draw it out again; perhaps she is convoyed to the president, a trim, snappy person, to whom she says, "Good evening!" (it being 12 m.) "money is such a responsibility, isn't it?—doesn't it make you dreadfully nervous having so much about, etc., etc.—"

In her eagerness to become affiliated with the great and pompous crowd that surges into the bank, transacts business and surges out again, she may even venture so far as to beg a check book from every man behind every grating but the right one, all the way down the tessellated tile. Having secured one she hastens home to practice her chirography

somewhat after this fashion: Pay to the order of Maggie Maloney, maid,—$500, three months wages in full to date; Pay to the order of Jiffany, Jeweler—$1,000, jade necklace; Pay to the order of Goodcut Clothing Co.,—$12.50, smoking jacket for John; Pay to the order of the Speedup Motor Co.,—$5,000, 1925 model; Pay to the order of the City of Greenville—$1,000,000, park pavilion and statue of donor.

Many men like to hover about a bank. They think it speaks well for the town to see its best citizens grouped solidly behind its financial interests, or standing carelessly in opulent abandon near the cashier's desk, or to be heard saying "hello, Ed" to the teller in familiar off-hand fashion.

When Chick approached her bank—it became her bank as soon as she entered its doors and looked back at the benighted mortals going by on the outside—she entered merrily, and tripped across the white marble gracefully. She approached a line of weary persons that stretched away from the teller's cage like a snake seized by a fit of indecision and attached herself to the head instead of the

foot of the line. The only kind of lines women, young and old, seem to really know about are those on their countenances. They are very careful to handle those with proper respect using a rotary motion near the chin, a larger sweep near the cheek bone and a coaxing, horizontal motion around the eyes, but when it comes to lines in theatres or banks, "dear, me, it isn't a woman's place to stand about waiting for great clumsy men who are so much better able to stand up for hours—I'll just squeeze in here near the front and get done in a hurry!"

Chick squeezed in behind a messenger boy, knocked a book out of a tall man's hand, stepped on an old gentleman's corn and said to the teller at the moment when he was trying to talk to somebody else.

"I want to put all the money I have saved in this bank."

A blank card, pen and bottle of ink were shoved in her direction.

"Look out!" bawled the man behind her as she picked up these articles, "you're dropping the ink!"

"I never drop anything," Chick returned,

dropping her gloves, and digging a flaunting feather into the benign eye of a fat man. She filled out the card while the tired line wriggled and tried the other foot for a while.

Her card said she was desirous of entrusting to the engulfing care of this vast institution the sum of $15.00. A clerk took the card, read it through, and fixed on her a piratic eye.

"Where is it?" he demanded.

"Where's what?"

"The money."

"Oh," murmured Chick intelligently as she swung a handsome new bag from her arm and opened it languidly. Nonchalantly she gazed into its purple silk interior. Nonsensically she dug about exhuming powder, perfume, scraps of silk and proofs from the photographer.

"It's gone!" she shrieked. "It's been stolen! You sent me a circular advertising the safety of your vaults and your grand white marble and then the very first thing when I answer your advertising I lose all the money I had in the world. Lock the doors! I want the place searched! I worked hard for that dough and now I won't have nothing for my old age!"

"Where did you carry your money when you left home," boomed a large, overbearing person, wearing a look of authority and a badge.

"In my bag o' course. And to show you how careful I was about its safety I bought a new bag the minute I reached the store, 'cause my old bag was on the bum and the fastening was rickety and the handle was wore out and I wasn't going to take no chance that way."

"How much money did you have when you left home?"

"Fifteen dollars, though I don't see what business that is of yours."

"How much did you pay for the new bag?"

"Fifteen dollars."

A loud guffaw rose from the weary line as it eased itself out of its strained attitude of suspectedness.

"Oh, boy!" chortled the messenger boy poking the old gentleman in the ribs.

CHAPTER XVIII

ROMANY was arrested.

To be sure he was arrested on suspicion only, but the outstanding fact was that he was summoned to the police station, thrust into a cell, the lock turned upon him and he was left to cogitate on the mysterious enmity of Flora McAlpine and her stout ally.

The police had come for him just at an hour when he and Jean, sunk in boarding house easy-chairs, were quietly discussing art in Romany's room.

"Mon Dieu! This is sans doute the most devilish outrageousness!" stormed Jean. "Why! Ees he not my friend?" he demanded as if that qualifying statement swept every offense or imagined offense to the winds.

"Don't put up no gab wid us, Frenchy, see? If you got anything to spout c'mon down to where spoutin' about every trouble under the dome is in the nick of fashion."

Romany took the affair calmly. To tell the truth he was not loathe to go to the station

though he should have preferred to have gone voluntarily. If there were anything against him he felt that it would be a relief to have it brought into the open.

He had shaved and nothing had come of it. He went to the station and nothing came of that either.

He was looked up; looked down; looked over; looked into; scrutinized; inspected; examined; investigated; he was prodded; punched; intimidated; hectored and set free.

"There's nothing against you."

"I'm not the man?"

"Nothing like him. He's got a scar in the left arm pit, broken toe, and a few other little marks of beauty that don't show on you."

After this episode Toy attacked the clay model of Romany with renewed vigor. During the hours when he was absent at his work it became her habit to fashion children, ragged and neat, dogs, cats, or any of the countless live objects that passed and repassed along the red bricked court. She interpreted them sturdily, boldly, lopping off all indeterminate lines and shadings as they appeared. In these

small studies she made use of bald power rather than sentiment.

Daily her touch hardened and clarified. She worked for absolute truth, never for mere prettiness. She had no guide nor teacher other than her indomitable desire to keep abreast of circumstance so that she might urge Romany on.

Romany posed for her often. Her soul took the facts of his form and substance as they were revealed before her and in its crucible she wrought an impression of those facts that pointed to a more perfect result than Romany's brow and wide set eyes and kindly mouth alone would supply.

She conjured forth his dreams; she lined the beauty of returning hope; the strength born of the deep purposes of a man so cultured as to know thorough discipline of his emotions; a man whom life had taught to transfer the satisfactions of the body over to the mind; in Romany's face she put all that she knew he must one day have been, and added to it what she knew he would some day be again.

It was the strangely awakened face of one

who has wandered long in the wilderness, and coming to the brow of a hill, looks down upon his sunlit homeland. This constantly recurring thought in her mind was bodied forth in the clay so that the face had the mystic grandeur of cruelly won peacefulness.

As she worked on her model and the eyes flamed into life, she called it to herself, "On the Hilltop," and when the last molecule had been etched away with a needle point she scratched these words under the finished head.

Upon the announcement by Toy to Mrs. Sude of the completion of "On the Hilltop" Mrs. Sude swept gaily in to Toy's studio to view it, accompanied by her following of painters, poets, journalists and actors.

Toy's work was proclaimed great; stupendous; important; august; exalted; and Toy was acclaimed a genius. The newspapers and other publications took notice of her; strangers called to view her work.

Mrs. Sude insisted that "On the Hilltop" be placed on public view, and because of Toy's widening reputation she was shortly asked to show the piece at a notable exhibi-

tion. The coupling of the fact that the exhibition rooms were not yet in readiness with Mrs. Sude's impatience and anxiety that Romany's modeled likeness be placed on view finally resulted in an arrangement between Mrs. Sude and the owner of an exclusive Michigan avenue shop, and it was put on exhibition in his windows.

A cast of white plaster had been made from the clay model as the plaster would keep its shape and still represent the full intent of the artist.

The following morning Romany came around to the window in which his plaster head and shoulders were set. He went close to the glass and stood immovable gazing in at his own face as it looked out with its almost unearthly expression of lofty belief. Moments passed. Other people came by and stopped. They commented and moved on, but Romany remained immovable and dumb. The shaven face looking out from a window where printed matter was displayed was a link with the past. Here had Romany shaved off his beard and his mustache and gone about the streets unnoticed; here was Romany set

up to view in a window on one of the three greatest boulevards of the world and no one recognized him though five short years before his name had been on every civilized tongue. So soon does the world forget. So soon does greatness, unheralded, become outcast.

Standing there unaccosted, unknown, perfectly assured of the world's forgetfulness suddenly Romany — remembered!

"I know you," he said to the figure behind the glass, "I know you! You have looked out at me before from hundreds of windows, from placards, from printed columns — and I don't know whether I am glad to see you again, or not!"

He turned from the window and made a slow way through the hurrying throngs. He crossed the Boulevard at risk of his life so deep was he sunk in meditation. He reached the shore of the lake and sat down heavily on a bench and looked out motionless and sad. He had remembered! He knew his name! He recollected the place he had filled in the affairs of men; he thought of the home that had been his across the ocean. Toy had been

right. He was English. As Romany sat there he knew he had only to walk in to the nearest newspaper office and speak to the merest cub to have his story flashed over the world; to regain his lost hold; to claim the things that were his.

But he continued to sit immovable on the lake bank on a stiff green bench. He wondered whether it would be better to forget again. He dare not juggle with the tie that was strongest, deepest, dearest in his heart—his companionship with Toy. He did not know whether Toy cared for him only as any good woman would care for an unfortunate whom she had befriended or whether her love merged into something more. It seemed to him that he dare not make the test. That he dare not step out of his place of dependence upon her for fear that she, recognizing his ability to stand alone, might feel their ties cut off. The torture of oblivion was nothing compared with even the thought of separation from Toy.

Yet, as he walked toward her studio his mood cleared; her love seemed to reach out to him through the streets and to scatter his doubt and uncertainty.

It was as if he had become an empty shell that had been filled with nectar upon which a clear light shone touching sparks from limpid depths. The film of half knowledge was gone. He became taut as steel upon which a passion of flame had descended to mold and bend him to its will and passing had left him set in an unchanging pattern. His soul seemed to leave his body and rush along lighted ways; it came out into bright spaces and dashed headlong into freedom; joy galloped like a maddened thing out of the maze of uncertainty and came to meet him pushing him forward into to-morrow's sun; the past melted into the blaze of the present; Romany remembering his old world opened his eyes on new worlds where past and present disappeared, were forgotten and one form alone remained. His joy in the return of his memory was eclipsed by a greater joy, his love for Toy.

The universe had burst into song and Romany no longer blindfolded by circumstance walked through drab streets as through lanes of opening flowers.

That same morning Toy went to the public

library to look up an article on modern sculpture she had read in a magazine and subsequently misplaced.

Her spirit expanded under the present day orderliness and usefulness of the library compared to the one she had known as a girl where the few moth eaten volumes were carefully guarded from the very public whose money had purchased them and where the motto of the public library of twenty years ago prevailed—"The public be damned."

While the attendant was searching for the article she turned the pages of a number of old magazines that had been brought out from various shelves for disposal. She chanced upon one that had been printed five years before. She glanced through it curiously noting the very apparent change in style in both reading matter and stock that a few years had brought about. Suddenly she came upon a picture. Her face went white. The attendant, returning, spoke to her but receiving no answer left the bound volume containing the magazine for which she had asked and went away. The pupils of Toy's eyes dilated as she continued to stare at the picture before her.

It was the picture of a familiar face; the face of the man for whom she lived. It was vivid with the glory of achievement. Under the firm chin a smart tie was knotted; the waistcoat was of an ultra fashionable cut. Beneath the picture was printed SIR HUBERT ROMEYNE and in smaller type:—

> The man proclaimed by London and New York king of tragedians. His mysterious disappearance after the shooting of his wife in his arms by her lover has caused much regret to an admiring public. It is believed that the shock of the tragedy coupled with overwork unbalanced his mind. He disappeared without explanation, and continued search has failed to reveal his place of hiding. The world of art is poorer because of his absence from it.

Toy asked the attendant at the desk if she might take the magazine with her. She left the one containing the article on sculpture untouched. She was referred to the librarian and after a great deal of talking and calling of various departments it was decided that the magazine might be allowed to go as it was not listed for binding and would be disposed

of in some manner in the course of a few days.

She went home slowly holding it carefully under her arm. She was incapable of thought. Her mind was dull and almost blank. She wanted to get home and lie down in a darkened room and rest. Instead she was obliged to usher two gentlemen whom she found waiting in Mrs. Sude's drawing room into her own apartment. Fate has a way of throwing over several levers at once very often as if having dallied with a situation overlong it becomes imperative to charge it with vitality, to handle it masterfully and clear the way for the next move.

Just a short time after Romany had stopped before the bust of himself that was on exhibition in the Michigan avenue shop two well dressed men were skimming down that same thoroughfare on the top of one of the lumbering though popular busses that afford so much pleasure to hatless out of door patrons. They arose from their airy seats at Lake street and climbed down the narrow spiral staircase. They seemed a bit confused

as to the exact point of alighting and one of them finally accosted the conductor.

The conductor happened to be in a jubilant mood and he smiled. Now smiles have done wonders in this world and this particular smile smiled by a rough jaunty conductor on a Chicago bus—and nowhere are there any rougher or jauntier—was the slight but powerful wedge that changed the lives of two persons well known to us—Toy and Romany. Far fetched you say—you see no connection—very well, let us see what that smile revealed first . . . . it revealed two oddly shaped front teeth both cleft through the center from top to bottom by fillings of gold and it revealed two deep dimples in the tanned cheeks of the bus conductor.

The older of the two men looked at him intently forgetting the question he had asked about a street and asking another on top of it.

"Why, you're Jim Kinkaid, aren't you?"

"Yessir, that's my name."

"Well you will hardly remember me, I suppose, but I remember entertaining you at my house one night in New York while you were in service. My son thought a great deal

of you . . . . believe you and he were pretty good pals at the front."

"Why, hello Mr. Kingman . . . . awful glad to see you again . . . . you certainly treated us boys right . . . . but how did you remember me after seeing me among so many and me in these togs and all?"

"Remembered your smile, my boy."

"That so? Well, how's Ralph, sir?"

"He's busy. Gone into the real estate business. Drop him a line when you have time. He would be glad to hear from you."

Kingman handed the young fellow a card bearing his son's address.

"I'll do that, sir. He was mighty square to me and I often think of him."

"Been at this job long."

"About a year. I'm going through medical college and this helps out on expenses and gives me plenty of fresh air. Got kind of run down . . . . lost my appetite and all, so I decided to take this on. Some of the boys are waiters in the down-town cafés, but I prefer fresh air for mine."

Kingman and Jim shook hands as the bus prepared to turn west at Jackson.

"Turning west—turning west on Jackson," Jim shouted up the stairway and a bevy of passengers descended in confusion to push a way to the street through a determined mob waiting to get aboard. The two men were carried forward to the curb stone.

"Bye," called Jim.

"Good bye, son."

And now we come to the part played by the smile. If Jim had not smiled it is not at all likely that Louis Kingman would have recognized him. Many months before when he had entertained Jim one evening he, Kingman, had just had a particularly severe siege with his dentist and had had a front tooth sawed off and reconstructed. This circumstance made him particularly alert on the subject of front teeth. He had noticed Jim's. They were filled in a conspicuous and bizarre manner. Being a man who noticed details and connected trifles he had discovered that at a certain point of the widening of Jim's smile his dimples popped out and drew attention away from his conspicuous teeth. Mr. Kingman had never admired dimples in a man's face, but as he sat ruminating an older man

marooned among a roomful of young fellows, he concluded that dimples in this instance were a decided asset. This small bit of cogitating served to stamp Jim's face indelibly on Kingman's mind. Today Kingman had asked Jim a question about a certain street. Jim, being in a cheerful mood, had replied with a smile. Recognition and then the conversation had followed and, while it was in progress, the old bus was also in progress down the avenue and when the two men finally alighted they had gone several blocks beyond the point at which they had originally intended to alight, as the nearest corner to the railway station.

They therefore retraced their way and in going back they passed the window in which Romany's calm, peculiarly beautiful face looked out upon the hurrying crowds.

In passing the window Kingman glanced in. He stopped. He caught his breath.

"Look!"

He grasped the other man's arm . . . . grasped it so fiercely that the other man winced.

"Where? At what?"

"There! There!"

Kingman pulled his companion toward the window and they stood just where Romany had stood quietly looking in at his own face a few moments before. But Kingman's face was not calm. Neither was the other man's when his glance at last found the object toward which his friend was excitedly waving.

"As I live it's Hurbert!"

"It is beside that a marvelous piece of work."

"Beautiful . . . . strangely spiritual . . . . just the look I have seen on his face in lofty moments . . . . a look the camera never seemed to catch."

"Camera's too hasty . . . . superficial . . . . doesn't go deep enough . . . . merely takes account of surface."

"This is truth itself."

Kingman bent down and through the glass read the words under the bust. "On the Hilltop — 1922."

Again he grasped his friend's arm.

"Look at that! See what that says! 1922! That means he's alive. I didn't take in the significance of the thing at first. Thought it might have been done several years ago."

"Let's go in here quick and get the name of the sculptor."

They entered the shop. They had forgotten they were on the way to the station. They had forgotten their tickets for New York were in their pockets, that their trunks were on the train, that the train was close to the hour of departure.

"Is that bust for sale?"

"I really can't say, sir . . . . it was just put in here for exhibition until the rooms are open where a number of pieces are to be exhibited . . . . some more by this same sculptor and work by others."

"Whose work is this?"

"This is the first showing of her work in Chicago. . . . . It's a Miss Toy Ashworth."

Kingman shook his head over the name.

"Never heard of her."

"No one else ever did, but I believe they will from now on," volunteered the clerk.

"Undoubtedly," said Kingman. "Will you be kind enough to give us her address?"

The address was quickly written and handed to the waiting men.

As they emerged again into the street the

younger man, whose name was Saidenne, exclaimed:

"We've lost our train!"

"I'd lose a thousand trains for this!"

"So would I for that matter."

"How do you explain the whole thing?"

"Can't."

"We'll go and let the sculptor who has looked into our friend's soul do that."

"This is one of the biggest moments I've ever lived through."

"I prophesy you are soon to have a bigger one."

"You actually believe we shall find him . . . . after all this time . . . . after the fruitless search of five years?"

"Yes, I believe we shall."

Kingman and Saidenne reached Toy's studio by cab. After the two men had seated themselves Kingman went directly to the matter that had brought them.

"We have been directed to you as the sculptor who placed 'On the Hilltop' in the shop on Michigan Boulevard."

Toy nodded and replied slowly.

"Yes, it is mine."

"It is a magnificent conception. It is both extraordinarily powerful and tender. May I congratulate you upon your production of what I feel assured will be recognized as one of the modern world's masterpieces?"

"Thank you—you are kind."

"We have recognized your model and as we are old friends we are most anxious to find him."

"That will not be hard."

"He is here now?"

"No."

"He lives in Chicago?"

"Yes."

"You know him well?"

"Very."

"May I ask what name you know him by?"

"We call him 'Romany'."

"He has not acquainted you with his full name?"

"He has been unable to remember it."

"I don't understand."

"He has lost his memory."

"Oh!"

"Does he earn anything to live upon?"

"Very little. Beside being attached to a

"He was not favorably impressed with America. He did not like it much."

"He likes it now!"

"I suppose the reason that he came back here after the tragedy was because of his desire to flee from familiar sights; or, perhaps, he had no knowledge of his direction, but just went blindly forth to assuage his pain."

"His wife—did she die?"

"In his arms—a sad and terrible thing!"

"Poor Romany!"

As she spoke his name she saw Romany passing the windows, but her visitors did not see him as they were seated with their backs to the light.

Romany came round to the studio door, passing through the court yard and under the blowing vines that clung with eager spiral fingers to the lattice either side of the door. Toy saw him as he ascended the short flight of steps into the studio. She excused herself from Kingman and Saidenne and closing the door behind her went to meet Romany.

It was a bewildering day—the magazine article first—then the men in her living room and now Romany . . . . Romany with a look

on his face she had never seen before. Just behind his beautiful wide eyes love looked out at her . . . . love signalling happily . . . . into Toy's eyes flamed an answer.

They both stood very still at opposite sides of the room. Then Romany raised his arms and opened them to her. His chin was high and she caught a look of rapt adoration slightly aslant his beautiful face.

He stood waiting . . . . holding his arms toward her as he had dreamed through days of torturing uncertainty that he might hold them . . . . and she came into them with her face turned against his breast . . . . still he waited . . . . then trembling, rapturous with half breaths of quiet elation she turned her eyes to his eyes and her lips to his lips but he remained immovable looking down, down into the soul of the woman who had saved him from ruin and despair . . . . reverently he touched her glossy hair waving back in full rolls from her flushed face. The waning light of the passing day poured around them from the high skylight. They were like silent colorful players in a dream. Tense emotion had arrested all small commonplace im-

pulses and they stood man and woman, silent and stately as marble from which a master hand had just withdrawn its chisel and patient little love held so long away from his kingdom, wandering through nights of lonely vigil came home at last.

Romany's encircling arm drew Toy closer and closer. She yielded to him as a flower yields to the command laid upon it by the sun—in the silent intensity of their embrace there was nothing conditional; each gave all and received return; the world outside the windows dwindled into insignificance . . . . the breath of the universe became a faint breeze that mingled between them warm and soft . . . . time and space were blotted from their consciousness . . . . a clock struck . . . . a wagon passed . . . . voices murmured behind the closed door . . . . a child screamed . . . . a leaf fell fluttering upon the skylight . . . . Romany closed his eyes . . . . perhaps he prayed. . . . .

"Romany!"

She wanted his kiss.

Those tender full kind lips were hers at last. The pressure of them was reverent

. . . . it clung with throbbing intensity . . . . it melted into madness . . . . it was withdrawn, reluctantly to return again . . . . fuller . . . . deeper . . . . longer . . . . again . . . . and again . . . . and again. . . . .

"Romany!"

"Yes, my own."

"I have something to tell you—something very, very strange—there is some one there," she indicated the closed door behind which the two men waited—"some one who knew you well!"

"And so is there someone here!"

Toy smiled, thinking he meant herself.

"Dearest, most patient of women—I have remembered! The plaster head—your marvelous work—told me as I stood gazing in upon it through the shop window today. I have remembered everything—everything! I can offer you now not only my voice, as I once offered, but I can offer what that voice has gained—wealth, position, honor."

"I loved you under the cloud, Romany."

As Romany and Toy opened the door from the studio and entered the room where King-

man and Saidenne waited the two men bounded forward with a shout on their lips.

They clasped Romany close; they patted his shoulders; wrung his hands; tears rolled down their faces. Romany was shaken and pallid.

"Dear old friends—dear old friends!"

"Thank God we have found you at last—though we had almost given over looking this last year."

They sat down and talked for hours. Romany listened bewilderedly to all they had to tell him of his former life and affairs.

Chick and Jean came in and, wide-eyed, joined the circle to listen with bated breath to the marvelous developments.

CHAPTER XIX

ROMANY'S friends carried him away. It was all decided suddenly as are so many important things. He was to return to England to settle a hundred matters that had been held in suspension during his unexplained absence.

Toy, Chick and Jean saw him aboard the train. His last look was for Toy though his words were directed to all three.

"You will hear from me soon and often," he called as the heavy wheels turned slowly.

But no letters came.

To Toy the passing days seemed almost unbearable. They were filled with a growing restlessness. During the weeks and months she and Romany had spent together time and space had seemed but kindly backgrounds against which the ambitions held by their souls in common stood in sharp relief; but now time was a cruel thing that dragged painful hours over her bruised consciousness; it held a million terrors since in its slow pass-

ing it was empty of Romany's love. Toy wandered daily over battlefields of slaughtered hopes, but she was aware that no matter what her present suffering, no matter what her present weakness of limb and soul she would get on somehow. The mysterious inner force that Romany had called power would keep her afloat. She was past the day of youth, its keen acquiring and its desolating relinquishments.

Aside from Romany's declared love for her and his apparent and astonishing disregard of her feelings she wondered at his deviation from the broad spirit of camaraderie of which he had been so tender a disciple. He had not only neglected her, but his failure to send word to either Chick or Jean had cruelly chilled their loyal hearts.

All the time Romany had been with her, Toy had thought him utterly unlike any other person in the world . . . . because of the majesty of his bearing . . . . the suaveness and delightful ease of his motions she had set him apart . . . . the high light of her enthusiasm over his depths of cultured discernment and her warm affection for him made of him

an outstanding figure in the world of men about him. Now she was constantly startled into a sickish faintness by the sudden appearance of a pair of tweed shoulders round a corner, by a cane jauntily held, by a trim shoe and ankle ascending stairs ahead of her, by a crush hat carelessly worn that viewed from the distance of a block had every appearance of being Romany's hat on Romany's head. She saw Romany in a hundred men . . . . he was after all much like his fellows . . . . the whole world contained reminders of him . . . . reminders that bit at her heart and blanched her cheek . . . . Romany was gone . . . . gone . . . . and yet he had come back in myriad ways to remind her of their long companionship. The streets . . . . the shops . . . . the theatres . . . . the benches along the lake . . . . the budding parkways . . . . these all cried aloud of Romany until the city oppressed her so sorely she wanted to fly from it. In the studio was no surcease for there dreams pressed and crowded in upon her . . . . dreams that had been woven of shining gossamer stuff . . . . now turned heavy and stale, dreams that had fallen from shimmer-

ing heights to catch and snare her stumbling steps . . . . dreams . . . . stuff of the soul . . . . soft as the breasts of doves . . . . clean as the inner petals of a camelia . . . . golden as the bright rim of sunset . . . . dreams palpitant and glowing . . . . dreams shared by another that in halving had accrued added effulgence . . . . dreams that had made the world a fair, fair place . . . . opalescent dreams whose tints had descended into the dust . . . . dreams broken and torn . . . . dreams crucified by heavy silence.

One warm evening after a light supper of milk and toast Toy opened the front windows in her living room to let in what faint stirring of air might come from the superheated street. As twilight descended she picked a dark cushion from a chair and opening the front door laden with its burden of soot and dust stepped out upon the narrow stone porch and sat down.

The thick, sticky black railings either side of the steps ran along at just the height of her gaze so that she had either to stoop or to stretch to see over them. All along the street men were spraying water on the hot walks

and house fronts and they sucked it up thirstily, giving silent thanks in the faint mist and steam that rose from their parched surfaces.

Though the sun had withdraw his torturing rays the pavements and bricks would reflect the heat of his intensity long into the dark hours of the night. In the consciousness of the whole city there was only one word — one obsession — heat.

Swarms of people dragged themselves wearily through the narrow street, half clad, quarrelsome, despairing. Like droves of exhausted cattle they sought the waters of the lake, whole families plunging in together, leaving naked babies on the shore because they were too frail to be carried into the mass of dripping, puffing humanity that swept up and down the blistering beach.

Pouring from the congested districts west of State street they passed in constant review before one of the most stately and imposing hostelries in America. Guests in this exclusive and perfect establishment were protected from the passing hordes by freshly washed panes of plate glass. Here sat men in ducks sipping frapped beverages; stabbing fastid-

iously at cantaloupe; their canvas shoes resting easily on cool tile, artificial breezes touching into life and perfume the long fronds of ferns and the bankings of flowers in the great windows. Conversing in polite tones they looked out through the glass to where two feet away the hordes swarmed on, bare legged, unhatted, ragged, grimy, coarse, unmindful of decorum; fat women in bath robes; terrifyingly skinny men in top coats and nothing more, their bleached limbs appearing almost apologetic in the meagreness of their shrunken state. The top layer of the city and the bottom layer and in between a thin layer of plate glass.

A door in the basement of the house next but one opened and a man came forth with the inevitable nozzle and hose. As he dashed the spray here and there he advanced in Toy's direction. He was a butler and his master was away and having been shut in the house alone all day he wanted a little human companionship. Toy supplied his need.

"Terrible blistering, isn't it, Miss?"

"It has been almost unbearable—but we are fortunate in being nearer the lake than these poor creatures who live west of us."

"Well, they are awful sights, some of 'em —enough to make a self-respecting person blush with shame the way they disregard decency and go through the street attired in a bath towel with a cake of soap in their hands and the family dog tagging after."

Toy laughed.

"Course they're only human and I s'pose one oughtn't begrudge them the comfort of a few cold waves of water, but I certainly do feel ashamed of the city when the master has out of town guests and they stand about and look out of the windows between our lace curtains and say, 'My word! What strange objects to be sure!'—'have the police no rules and regulations?'—'dear, dear, see that perfectly shocking woman'—I always manage to serve the dinner or distract their attention in some manner before we're entirely disgraced. Sometimes I almost feel as if I were filling a situation in a bath house."

"It is disconcerting—but it is only one of the problems bred by rawness."

"Yes, that's it, but with all its bad manners it is a great city after all."

"With a great heart—and in the end that's what counts."

As the summer days grew longer and the heat became more intense the burden of Romany's inexplicable silence wore on the three friends he had left. The sight of the sorrow in each other's faces was an added hardship. Chick worried about Toy until she had lost the warm flush from her own cheeks and had lost weight. Toy sent Chick and Jean into the country to romp and rest while she stayed in her studio.

In the paved courtyard behind Mrs. Sude's house stood a stunted pear tree sucking hard won sustenance from a sparse allotment of soil. Among its branches two dainty bright eyed wrens hopped and twittered, catching swift legged bugs and keeping a proprietary eye on a tiny green and white chalet Toy had fastened to the window ledge. From this pygmean dwelling two little fledglings had just made a wary and uncertain descent to tumble about on the stone pavement like diminutive balls of brown wool until the parent birds had coaxed them into successive efforts that had at last carried them into the lowest

branches of the tree, where they sat scorched by the terrific heat of the withering air. Toy descended into the mysteriously moldy interior of Mrs. Sude's basement, where strange objects loomed ponderously in the dampness. She found the indispensable hose and nozzle and returned to the courtyard to attach it to the plug at the side of the basement stairs and to send a fine spray of water into the drooping tree. The little family of wrens viewed it quizzically and then hopped into its grateful coolness. Presently one of the older birds sparkled into a rippling song that cascaded through the blazing air to the drip, drip, drip of the water through the leaves.

He sang of home and household joys . . . . a tiny bit from the glorious chorus that accompanies and enfolds the vast pageant of life. The wren was happy with his mate. There was the eternal key to all song! His clear call rang above centuries of conjectures and objections; the world of men shouted of sex and its difficulties . . . . the wren fluffed his wings in the pear tree and trilled, for in the kingdom of furry and feathered creatures there is no question mark.

Toy pulled a low rocking chair across the sill of the studio door and sat down under the tree with a book. But she did not read. She thought instead. She missed Chick and Jean, but Romany's absence and his silence turned in her heart like an auger that went deeper and deeper, widening its pathway as it went. A horrid lethargy was creeping upon her day by day. Immediately after Romany's departure she had worked with mad intensity, but now her work sent spasms of sheer distaste along her nerves. Hope had run out of her heart, leaving a lean wraith whitening there upon empty sands. Not in all her life had she suffered so. Her other sorrows had been things to fight. Tangible things against which she had used weapons of anger and scorn to assuage conflicts and tumults of feeling. But who could fight the thunderings of silence? To an expectant listener there is no more blighting thing than the knock on the door that does not come.

To have some one bluster up the steps and say: "Well, I've enjoyed knowing you very much and all that, but I'm going to strike out into new lines now—good luck and good

bye," one could stand that; or to receive a graceful note bidding one a long farewell but pointing to some distant meeting that time would fill with exchanged experiences — even that one could bear with equanimity, but to hear nothing — to watch disdain come coldly out of the passing hours and stalk haughtily toward future days . . . . Toy laid her head back against the rough trunk of the pear tree and tears dropped down on her book, bleaching round white spots on its green linen cover.

Again, after recent easy days of quiet satisfactions and deeply stirred love, she was cast into a muddled state where her mind battled fiercely against reactions and their long retinues of hopes half fear and fears half hope.

Presently her mood became less tormented and momentarily she consoled herself with the thought that through the illusion that she had been helping Romany she had in reality been helping herself. She had gained fame. But in gaining it she had lost him. And in losing him all was lost . . . . fame . . . . a shallow thing . . . . a thing that could not stir one's own hearth fire on a rainy day . . . . fame . . . . a thing one laid down peace to

secure . . . . fame that could not look smilingly into lonely eyes nor accompany one down moonlit paths . . . . fame . . . . commendation printed about one in newspapers . . . . fame . . . . a word with brutal shoulders that hurtled lesser mortals from the path and escorting one arrogantly to one's front door pushed one inside peremptorily and hurried away to shout raucously through the channels of the world—and one sat inside, there alone, unless one had—a mate.

Because of Toy's earnest desire to keep Romany near her and to help him back into the affairs of men she had followed his dreams and moods and caught them with masterly stroke in "On the Hilltop." She had perpetuated his gentle sweetness so that other strugglers might find hope in its silent promise to battle on . . . . and now the whole thing had turned to chaff in her hands. The winds of doubt would scatter her belief far and wide and she would become what she had been before . . . . nothing . . . . nobody . . . . a woman living on a few inherited dollars . . . . a woman getting in the milk every morning and going to bed unloved every

night, supine, torpid, useless, waiting for the equivocal peace of an indefinite end. Into the dark gulf of frantic conjecture she stumbled headlong enveloped by a Cimmerian gloom in which so many mateless women eternally wander.

In her mind's eye a wall of ice was rising between her heart and Romany's. She could no longer dip into the grateful glow of his personality and the ice that was creeping upward, upward to surround her and shut her from appreciation of the world's activities would soon shut her away from even the stir of rich contemplation born of memory . . . . love denied turning to ice . . . . ice . . . . ice. . . . .

CHAPTER XX

I am the soul you cast out
In the darkness to wander
Alone.
The tolling bell that sounds
In your ear is my voice
Sobbing;
The nights are filled with
The shuddering wings of my
Agony;
Each new day is but the
Echo of a desolate
Yesterday;
Wherever you go on the face
Of the wide earth you will
Hear my voice
Crying,
For I am the soul you cast out
In the darkness to wander
Alone.

TOY scribbled these lines on a pad and sat before her desk looking at them. Tears rose in her eyes. Mrs. Sude emerged from the hallway, and looked smilingly in at Toy's door.

"May I come in?"

"Of course!"

"I am such a busy person I hardly have time to be civil to the people in my own house to say nothing of my neighbors and relatives."

Mrs. Sude was a kindly woman behind the bustle and hurry that so completely filled her life from dawn till dark. She was secretly sorry and concerned over Toy's carefully concealed but palpable grief at Romany's absence and silence. She was on her way to a restaurant dinner when the dejected droop of Toy's shoulders altered her intention.

"I just must tell somebody about a feature story I gathered today. It's a rich one! Society people—you know the Dean Trents? Well, Mr. and Mrs. Dean Trent have been the recipients of countless invitations during the season. The time has come when they must bond, brand or bury their servants in order to keep them long enough to give a series of smart affairs. Mrs. Dean Trent exhausted by the ordeal of constantly changing servants turned the problem over to Mr. Dean Trent, who promised to manage his home as he would his business and 'Procure domestic

freedom, m' dear!' To this end he quoted a rising novelist who sleeps on Pullmans and dines in homes not his own. It is the novelist's idea that a spirit of comradeship should be breathed about servants if one is to hold them. Mr. Dean Trent believed it would be distinctly clever to give a series of entertainments for the servants before launching on his own round of affairs. A birthday party was arranged for the butler. Everything went off well. There was plenty of plate, napery and silver to go around and nobody became any more intoxicated than a real lady or gentleman would! This affair was followed by the wedding in the conservatory of the second houseman and the third housemaid, who were both orphans. They spent a leisurely honeymoon riding about in Mr. Dean Trent's second best town car. Of course if one has decided to be thoroughly democratic one must carry on. This feeling led to a funeral. The great aunt of the laundress died and Mr. Dean Trent could not bear to think of the poor old soul left alone in the morgue, so the services were conducted from the gold salon.

"Holmes, the natty chauffeur, was taken

with sudden chills one morning. The garage, being remodeled, was damp in consequence, so he was removed to the pink guest room, where he developed spots on his complexion and the house was quarantined. This, however, blew over quickly, as it was discovered his malady had been induced by his consumption of a large quantity of strawberries at $1 a pint box. The most important member of the household was Laura, the old cook, who had served the family faithfully for the extraordinary period of three months, six days, and five hours. Mr. Dean Trent arranged a week-end party for her and many of her relatives arrived several days in advance. As the house filled up rapidly Mr. and Mrs. Dean Trent decided to take rooms in an apartment hotel until the servants' festivities were concluded. They planned to spend a few quiet days sending out invitations to their own friends for the series of smart affairs they would soon give abetted by a corps of happy servants. However, the Dean Trents found they had no friends. They were unmercifully snubbed. They were considered declasse and quite outside the pale by those snobbish ones

who had viewed Mr. Dean Trent's domestic remedy.

"An idea seized Mr. Dean Trent in the middle of the night. Having no friends there was no longer occasion for maintaining a mansion. He telephoned the cook and presented her with the house and lot, after which he arranged with the hotel for a fifty year lease on the apartment. He awakened his stupefied wife and remarked: 'The conclusion of my campaign is not exactly as I had anticipated, m' dear—however, I am now enabled to invite you to a life of freedom from domestic care!' Mrs. Dean Trent, hearing the word 'invite' through her lace boudoir cap, murmured sleepily, 'I accept with pleasure!'"

Toy repaid Mrs. Sude's valiant attempt at jocularity by laughing forlornly once or twice, closing her eyes and slipping to the floor in a sudden white faint.

CHAPTER XXI

IT WAS a golden day in Brinsdale. A deep mellow voiced bell at the end of the tarred and shady street gave notice that eight o'clock in the morning had come around again.

The old tavern in which Lincoln had once been a guest, and that now housed Chick and Jean, blinked sleepily in the sun as a linen shade was raised here and there, producing the effect of a somnolent eyelid opening lazily. The scent of pine gum, heliotrope, mint and warm grasses were blended in a delightful fragrance on the breath of a light breeze.

The worn boards of the old verandah and the thin weather beaten columns appeared slightly apologetic in the inquiring sunlight because of their paintless, denuded state. They seemed to shrink and draw together as very old and tired persons shrink from critical young eyes.

Now and then a marauding chicken flapped its wings and hopped upon the

bleached boards, mincing delicately across to flutter from the far end into the garden beyond. Imperial old elms that had risen to great heights through long quiescent years waved protectingly above the low roof of the primitive dwelling and in the kitchen garden behind the tavern bees buzzed and broods of young birds chattered above the swelling currants and flapped awkward, heavy wings through the laden fruit trees.

A door opened and Jean stepped out into the sunlight. He stood quietly surveying the garden. Presently he discovered Chick bending over the strawberry plants that clung with soft persistency to the moist earth. She found their luscious fruit with quick fingers dyed a rich warm hue at the tips from frequent excursions among the leaves and twigs of vines and bushes. When the sun had peeped over the rim of the hill Chick had peeped back at him where she stood cramming dewy berries into her warm, round mouth. She was like a hungry angel at the back door of heaven.

"Hello!" she had said to the sun, "you're a lazy old bird!"

She spied Jean just as he discovered her.

"Want some?"

"Eating again?" he retorted.

"I haven't stopped yet—not since I came. I took two of those beauty apples to bed and every time I woke up I took a chew."

"Been up long?"

"Hours!"

"What you eating now?"

"Strawberries. Mnn . . . . Mnn . . . . Mnn . . . . they're wonderful good!"

"Hello, kitty!" Jean snapped his fingers at a bedraggled white cat that peered around a rose bush tentatively.

"Look out—she hairs off!"

"Breakfast—you think we have it soon, perhaps?" Jean glanced toward the kitchen windows where some sort of activity seemed to be going on behind the pink geranium blossoms and the white dotted curtains.

A hand pushed the curtains aside and a face almost as pink as the geraniums looked out and beamed at the two young guests.

"Breakfast's all ready, son. Come in any time you're a mind to. They's batter cakes and peaches to start on."

They made a dash for the door and col-

lided with a bare footed boy who had just rounded the corner of the shed.

"Got a tellygram here for Chatty Lard. You him?"

"Give!" replied Jean.

The boy thrust out a dirty fist and Jean accepted the crumpled yellow envelope.

"What it must be?" he asked Chick wonderingly.

"Dunno, silly, open it and take a look."

The message proved to be from Mrs. Sude:

> *My dear children:*
>
> I very much dislike to cut your vacation short but I believe you ought to be here. Miss Toy is not at all well and she is so sad I do not like to have her alone all day. Cram all the good time you can into the next two days and come home on Sunday and look after her.
>
> BELLE SUDE.

Chick had read the message over the crook of Jean's arm. He dropped it to his side and they looked at each other.

"Two days! Nevaire! We go now!"

"Without breakfast?"

"Non, non! Breakfast we have, then we depart."

"I believe Miss Toy is worried about Mr. Romany—because he does not write."

"I think myself."

"It's kinda strange—look here, Jean, I don't think it's square for him to treat her like that!"

"There is something all wrong. I have felt it myself some time, but I did not like to speak to you about it. She have no one left now but you and me. We must go quick and look what we can do for her."

"Sure!"

So they ate their breakfast, their healthy young appetites undiminished by the sudden summons away from paradise, bade their mystified but genial hostess good bye and rode soberly back to town in a train packed with other sober people jouncing along to various pursuits and errands in the turbulent city.

They took a cab at the station and drove directly to the studio. Mrs. Sude had given Jean a pleasant room in her house so that he might be near Toy and Chick. The door into the common hallway was slightly ajar and

they pushed in quietly. Before the hatrack, upon the box of which the postman was accustomed to lay the mail when there was no one about to receive it, a distorted bulk loomed. There was something sinister about its grotesque movements as it bent and poked among the letters on the box. After several moments of fruitless search the ponderous creature turned empty handed and the face of Flora McAlpine came into view.

"What you look for?" Jean demanded through his teeth. He disliked Flora heartily and felt quick disgust at what he supposed was a bit of officious prying. His voice had been rather more severe than he intended and the ugly faced woman glared at him maliciously.

"None of your business!" she snapped.

Her face fell into crafty, cunning lines. Her hands opened and closed and she shifted her clumsy feet in a nervous, ungainly fashion.

These few evidences of greater agitation than the situation would ordinarily have demanded caught Jean's quick eye.

"It is strange," he mumbled to himself, ig-

noring Flora as he opened the door into Toy's rooms and ushered Chick before him.

"We come!" he called cheerily.

There was a quick movement in the studio and Toy's astonished face looked at them from the parting of the magenta portieres.

"Why, my children! What has brought you back?"

"This!"

Jean held out Mrs. Sude's telegram and Toy read it wonderingly.

"Oh, I'm sorry—sorry to have done anything to take you away from the beautiful country—"

"It is no longer beautiful when you need us. Songs die in birds' throats, flowers droop, berries turn bitter—No! you need us—we come!"

"Sure! We gotta look after you once in a while. You can't have a cinch on that dope all the time." Chick fluffed her tiny arms as she had seen a mothering hen reassure its little ones.

"My dears—my dears—"

Toy's voice was tremulous, but her tired eyes were glad. Suddenly her arms went out

to these odd adopted children and all three laughed and wept together in a prolonged hug.

Jean and Chick carried Toy off to the park and kept her outdoors all day. It was not fresh country air, but it was air. Their merry chatter was diverting and the recent spontaneous assurance of their love for her and their quiet, unspoken but eloquent sympathy dispelled some of the clouds from her weary and burdened brain.

"We will walk her about much. It ees good. She sleep then," Jean had whispered to Chick as they started.

"You bet!"

They returned to the studio as dusk was falling—the belated eight o'clock dusk of the daylight saving plan. Jean threw open all the windows and a delightful breeze swept through the dear familiar rooms.

They affected a light gayety though the absence of Romany weighed heavily on all of them. They missed him from the corners of the room, from the chairs, from the fireless fireplace where he had so often bent to knock his pipe against the bricks before a final good night. They missed him at the table and

moved the chairs to divide the space evenly between them and cover the gap. Everywhere there stared at them the dreadful—GONE.

For supper they had a dainty salad served on delicate Italian ware; hot rolls; cold chicken; and fruit punch which Jean brought on proudly in a clear glass tankard with a silver top. Slices of pineapple and orange glistened through the frosty sides and cherries and raspberries sank or floated in the straw colored liquid. Then there was angel food and maple mousse to finish and Toy commented with pleasure upon her returning appetite.

After tea Toy and Chick drove Jean into his arm chair while they tidied the room and disappeared into the kitchen to put away the things. He lighted a cigarette and sat thinking. He was piecing out something in his mind . . . . keenly . . . . carefully . . . . slowly.

His cigarette went out and he did not light it again. Suddenly he jumped from his chair and consulted the telephone directory. Then he made an excursion up to his bedroom and bounding down two steps at a time called:

"I go out on errand. I return promptly."

"All right," Chick warbled over a brimming dish pan.

Jean dashed out of the house with a determined look on his face. He caught a street car at the corner and rode half a dozen squares, swinging off of the car on a quiet, dark street. He walked briskly half way down the block looking at the numbers and then nearing the one for which he searched altered his gait to a careless saunter. The house on which he fixed his gaze was on the opposite side of the street. After discovering it he took two or three turns back and forth studying it closely. He removed his hands from his pockets, pulled his cap over his eyes, hunched his shoulders and crossing the pavement ascended a flight of ten steps and slipped noiselessly through a narrow area way to the rear of the house. The rooms were dark and silent, but to be perfectly sure the house was unoccupied Jean crept up the back stairway and rang the bell. There was no answer. He had hoped earnestly there would not be. Under cover of the darkness he retraced his steps to the area way and there finding footing against an outstanding

ledge of the neighboring building, its windows also in darkness, he pried open a high pantry window.

This was a new Jean. Jean in the capacity of a house breaker. Yet he had no kit of burglar tools. The wobbly old lock sprang open at the determined jab of his penknife and he threw an exploring foot and knee over the sill and after a moment of suspense squeezed his generous frame through the window and stood upright in a musty shelved store closet.

He grinned. Partly at the role he was playing and partly because his plans were coming along so well. He turned the handle of the closet door and entered a large room which he knew to be the kitchen by the vague pent up scent of linoleum and gas. His foot struck a chair and he sat down in it until his eyes should become accustomed to the darkness and until he could get his flashlight which in an over cautious mood he had slipped into his boot top. He made his way through a series of rooms. All musty, all furnished with anciently upholstered pieces. There was a music room boasting an old square piano of earliest vintage, a stiff narrow parlor and a

draughty high ceilinged living room. It was in this last apartment that Jean's determination seemed to crystallize. He swept the walls with his toy flashlight, suddenly uttering a sound of satisfaction.

"There—I find that for which I search it."

He fell upon a battered oak writing desk. He ransacked its compartments with thorough, energetic hands and wrenched open the two heavy drawers, submitting their contents to the same close scrutiny. A look of disappointment spread over his face.

"Well, what I do now!"

Answering his question with celerity he closed the desk and leaving the room ascended the creaking stairway to the second floor. He looked into two bedrooms so scantily equipped as to furnish eloquent proof that they were doomed to an uninhabited state.

In the third bedroom, at the front of the house, there were, however, many evidences of a feminine occupant. A dingy breakfast cap hung on the bed post; dusty sprays of bitter sweet straggled up from a Japanese vase; kodak pictures rimmed a bleary mirror; a

voluminous wrapper and a huge pair of red felt slippers lay upon and under a rocking chair next to which stood a battered sewing basket balanced on a thin straw leg.

Jean rummaged in the basket; behind the books in an improvised bookcase the foundation of which had once undergone shipment in a freight car with a cargo of oranges packed in its interior. Then he attacked the bureau, turning over articles of feminine apparel with hands grown savage with the delayed fruition of his hopes.

At the last moment when he seemed about to abandon his search he bent forward suddenly to plunge in among a flat pile of gray-white chemises and to draw out a packet of half a dozen letters. He read the names on the envelopes carefully.

He closed the bureau drawer and stepped back into the center of the room. His elation almost stifled him. He danced on one foot, holding the envelopes above his head. He was no longer stealthy. He strode boldly out of the room and finding a switch at the head of the stairs flooded the hall below with sudden light.

A key sounded in the lock and looking down he saw the ponderous form of Flora McAlpine entering. He stepped heavily upon the stairway, sending a shrill squeak through the stale air.

"Who's there?" Flora shrieked.

"I—Jean Chatellard—"

"What do you mean!—come into the light where I can see you."

"Oui."

Jean descended and when half way down the staircase and Flora was assured it was he she fairly foamed with anger.

"You house breaker!—you thief!—you—you—"

"It is enough. Silent yourself!"

"I'll call the police and send you to jail where you belong!"

"I think no." Jean spoke quietly. "I think no for I have here what will assist you to spend rest of your days in penitentiary!"

He held Romany's letters out toward Flora.

"All addressed to Mees Toy Ashworth with exception of two which are address to myself—so you have play dangerous game—and why?"

Flora's face took on the quality of adamant.

"What have made you do this terrible thing?" thundered Jean. "What possess you to lie and steal—and murder your reputation? What have made you? Answer me!"

"Warts!"

"What!—warts—what it iss?"

Slowly Flora raised a fat hand and pointed to the mossy bumps on her ill shapen chin and nose.

"These things—these terrible warts—they've wrecked my life."

Tumbling tears found easy channels down her wrinkled face.

"Mon Dieu! What she says!"

Flora wilted and turning away from the stairway collapsed upon a chair in the stiff close parlor. She sobbed gutturally.

"Explain!" Jean demanded following her to seat himself near her huge quaking bulk.

"Nobody ever loved me. When I was a girl they all made fun of me because I was fat and had warts all over my face and when I grew up I almost died of loneliness because I couldn't find anybody that would marry me. I liked Mr. Romany and I wanted to give

him a home and be kind to him, but even he — a down and outer — wouldn't have me, so I hated him at last and I hated her and I hated everybody that had love when I hadn't any!"

"You mean you have pitied yourself till you grew more ugly inside than out — very bad." Jean shook his head and looked intently at Flora, surveying her warts thoughtfully. A bit of compassion melted into his gaze. He stood up.

"Come — so far thees is but between yourself and my own. If it ees not now too late I will no prosecute you."

"What do you mean?" sniffed Flora.

"I mean so I can reach Mr. Romany by cable and straighten out the wicked tangle you have made — I will do so and we will say no more of thees lettairs."

"But Mr. Romany and Miss Ashworth — they will know I stole them! — though I never opened them — you can see that yourself!"

"I also promees for them nothing shall be held to you — I promees — I promees — for the sake of your unhappy homeliness!"

Flora fell into a fury of weeping and Jean

departed under cover of her storm to read his two letters under the corner light, to hasten to a cable office and then to rush tumultuously home to Toy.

Jean burst into the studio door.

"See! That for which you sorrow is blown to thin air—lettaires!—lettaires!—from Mr. Romany!"

Toy started toward Jean and then stood still as if disbelieving her own ears.

"Oh, Jean! What do you mean? Where did you get them—?"

"I go after them. I go where I know they must be—and, yes, they are there! Take them—"

Jean laid the packet in Toy's outstretched hand. He led her gently to the door of her bedroom and ushered her in. He closed the door after her.

Jean who had been strong enough and wild enough and desperate enough to break into a house to hunt for means with which to destroy the anguish of the woman he adored was now tender enough, patient enough and delicate enough to give her her great moment alone with her lover.

"So—" he breathed catching Chick's arms and drawing her down on the divan beside him. "I will read you the lettaires Mr. Romany have sent to me."

"Where'd you get 'em this time of night?"

"That is vast secret, but I tell you. However, I wish you to disguise it from Mrs. Sude and all others."

"Sure."

"Well—how you say—I bust into Flora McAlpine's house and there I find the lettaires! It was when I discover her poking among the mail in the hallway on our return yesterday that I conceive idea."

The enormity of Flora's offense threw Chick into a quick rage.

"Damn her! Oh, Hell!—Excuse me!"

"I overlook but do not say so again. It is rotten word for a mouth so sweet. Come, we read."

New York.

My dear Jean and Chick:

These are busy days. Days in which I am trying to gather many ends into unaccustomed hands; days divided between solicitors, reporters, tailors and old friends, but there is scarcely a moment during my

waking hours that I do not think of you all and wish I might hear your cheery voices. I shall sail for England in three days and hope I shall have word of all of you before then.

Affectionately,
HUBERT ROMEYNE.

"And here is another. Most tragic this!"

Aboard S. S. Crescent
At the Pier.

My dear Jean:

I had looked and hoped for letters from you all as I had stated upon which ship I was sailing both to you and to Miss Toy, but there were no letters. I can scarcely understand it. I have written a number of times to Miss Toy and have received no reply. I have been particular to inscribe my address plainly and cannot understand this alarming silence. I hope no one of you is ill.

Do my good Jean wireless me at once and put my mind at ease.

With love to Chick and yourself and every good wish to Miss Toy, believe me to be,

Always fondly,
HUBERT ROMEYNE.

Jean and Chick had retired.

Toy sat with Romany's letters spread out on the table before her.

She had sent a cable to follow Jean's and now there were just the happy hours of waiting till she should hear from the dearest man in the world.

She had assorted Romany's letters by their dates and the story of her anguish and his own lay before her on top of her mahogany table. She read his first short letter over for the hundredth time.

New York.

Beloved:

I have found the moving spirit of fire; the white soul of music; the inner delicacy of flowers, the immeasurable glory of life; the blinding majesty beyond; the intangible core of the universe has been made tangible in your kiss.

Day is not day and night is not night—all time is but the after breath of your sweetness. I close my eyes because the spell of you is upon me. I open them for the same dear reason. So long as the sun is the sun I shall love you; so long as rivers turn to the sea my spirit shall turn to

yours; so long as light is light I shall worship your transcendent beauty.

There may be sailing dates and eager people and business exigencies in the world, but their urgency blows past me in a mist and is forgotten as I remember one hour and one woman.

"Hope is a lover's staff." Upon that staff I shall lean, my beloved, until such time as needing a prop and substitute no more, I may lay it aside to fold you close to my heart.

God grant that hour be soon is the dearest wish of your lover.

ROMANY.

CHAPTER XXII

ROMANY could only think that for some unaccountable reason they had elected to shut him from their lives. He could conceive no reasonable explanation. The silence of all three was conclusive. Life that had opened so suddenly and so brilliantly before his wondering eyes was now turned bitter and sad. His former triumphs so piquantly sweet upon his sudden remembrance of them were now negligible things.

Toy!

Around her he had built his highest hopes —because of her he had dreamed his deepest dreams. At moments he grew frantic with longing and apprehension.

Toy!

Of all life this was his darkest hour. Often he spoke her name aloud. Oh! the uneasy spell of it—the doubt that was painfully congealing all the warm running currents of his being.

Yet he attended to his manager's mandates;

he read and studied; he went painstakingly into the tangle of his private affairs and papers and was busy many hours each day in sweeping away the webs that his mysterious absence had spun.

Physically he was very fit. His appetite and digestion were good; his sleep undisturbed and his mind keen and attentive. To save himself from going to pieces a second time he knew he must shut worry from his consciousness. It was just around this one point that mystification gathered the thickest. Toy had taught him not to worry. If there had not been love behind her kiss—but there was!—there was!—ah, well—but if there had not been as her protracted silence would indicate—at least there had been affection. Her kind, tender heart would never prompt her to a cruel or unconsidered thing. In leaving him to silence, in withdrawing the wondrous spiritual companionship that had been theirs she had done so with a reason. If it was her wish that he go back into his former life and to forgetfulness—he must abide by that wish. Her silence was an inexplicable astounding thing, but she had so thoroughly

taught him to accept what each day brought that now he set aside his mad longing for her, his grief, his hope of the future, and went calmly and coldly about the multiplying affairs of his daily life as they opened before him.

He moved into his small but luxurious London house; was attended by efficient servants; entertained and was entertained; rode and drove; and after a period of weeks made arrangements with his manager to return to America for an opening in New York.

Then Toy's cable message came.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE plan was that Toy, Chick, and Jean were to meet Romany in New York, but Jean was delayed by a sudden development in his business affairs.

Two of his models of machinery that had been on exhibition had attracted the attention of a manufacturer and he had offered Jean a goodly sum for them and royalties in addition.

Jean threw down his handful of dough upon receiving a telephone message from his attorney.

"I come no more!" he shouted to the astonished head chef. "I have succeed with my inventions. I spend my time now to think!"

For several days he rushed back and forth between Toy's studio, his attorney's office and the office of the manufacturer.

Having suddenly emerged from the status of a cook to that of a gentleman of some means and attainment it was necessary that he be properly and tastefully clothed. Chick and

Toy accompanied him to a tailoring establishment.

In a hushed aside he explained to Toy:

"You pick so I not make distressing mistake of attiring myself too loud!"

All these various activities took the days that should have been spent in packing and journeying toward New York in anticipation of Romany's arrival.

They had expected to meet him when his boat docked, but Jean's sudden good fortune and the accumulating details attendant upon it delayed them far beyond the time at which it was necessary that they leave Chicago in order to precede the arrival of Romany's boat.

"He will excuse," Jean assured Toy again and again in his anxiety. His tender heart was torn between his desire to have her superintend the mending of his fortunes and his desire to have her meet Romany with all possible celerity.

Upon Romany's eager dis-embarkation, accompanied by Kingman and Saidenne, he was met not by the three persons he most wanted to see, but by a crowd of reporters and the explanatory telegrams from Chicago.

The edge of his disappointment at not seeing Toy was made less keen by his wholehearted rejoicing at Jean's success.

"A fine lad! A good lad—blessed with a thinking mind."

It was not until Romany's opening night on Broadway at the head of his own company that Toy, Jean and Chick came breathlessly in to New York. They dashed to a hotel, it was already eight o'clock; too late to reach Romany; they dabbed the grime and soot of travel from their expectant faces, attired themselves in clothes befitting the most momentous occasion of their lives and were driven to the theatre where Jean found tickets laid aside for them in the box office.

They sat through the first act of the play in a delirium of uneasy joy. Romany's consummate art amazed and terrified them by turns. It carried him so far away from them; into rarified realms where they could not hope to follow and yet he was their Romany after all; their playfellow; their comrade; their adviser; their devoted friend; he had lived where they had lived; he had dined, talked, walked, hoped and loved with them.

He was a commanding figure; his performance was masterly. Strapped above the faggots of misery and burned by the refining fires of despair some mysterious alchemy had slowly worked to turn him out a wondrous metal that rang clear . . . . a rare being of priceless value . . . . beyond sorrow . . . . beyond gain . . . . beyond the thin adulation of the world. A solid figure of pure beauty against whom the little affairs of men washed unheard as at the foot of a vast rugged crag that stood high above the choppy waters in the sun.

Again and again the ecstatic audience burst into applause. They remembered their old love for Romeyne and added to it their fresh adoration . . . . again and again the curtain was raised and he bowed his gracious acknowledgment of the honors heaped so lavishly upon him. He held his chin high and with his head slightly turned, his fine eyes swept the house for Chick and Toy and Jean. He found them and smiled straight into their eager eyes. Then at the constant repetition of "Speech! Speech!" he stepped from before the silently descending curtain.

"He will speak to you now. I know he will! Just to you!" Chick whispered excitedly.

"Why, he can't do that, dear!"

"But he will though. He will. You'll see!" cried Chick.

The vast audience, programs suspended, breath held, rustlings frowned down, heads immovable, thoughts feverishly centered, waited for a direct word from the great man who had gone under the waters of defeat and come up again greater than before. Every man and woman wondered what he would say. Every reporter held his pencil ready for the illuminating words, every young lady was in a transport of delightful anticipation, every old lady was roused from habitual passivity, every man was vitally interested.

It was such a moment as had never been known in any of America's playhouses before, the culminating glory of it had been anticipated weeks in advance and speculation had traveled from one end of the country to the other. Sir Hubert Romeyne had refused to give any explanation of his absent years, but to-night everyone felt he must tell. He knew

they were waiting . . . . his world was waiting . . . . the world that had reinstated him in its affections. It was their due. But the great actor's eyes were fastened on the loving kindness of one face alone, a face that had been his only world for weary months of shattered hopes. As the grandeur in Romany's wide dark eyes enveloped her Toy answered his look. In the midst of that vast assemblage they were alone with their triumph . . . . a triumph over poverty and despair.

The stage, the wings, the curtain, the boxes, the audience, were blotted out, and the souls of Romany and Toy met. Toy sat an utter stranger and unknown amid a sea of strange faces, yet she knew one man knew her as she had never been known before, for not by what they take but by what they give is the world of mortals measured. Her woman's white arms, her beautiful patience, her unceasing care and devotion had set him back in his place. In his great hour he could think only of that; as he looked out across his palpitant audience it was of Toy alone he thought in these closing moments. Standing there per-

fectly groomed and extraordinarily handsome, Romany remembered that she had reached down to him in the gutter. Her white hand had rested on the sleeve of his coat where the vermin of slatternly lodgings had crawled. She had said, "I shall believe in you, sick or well, rich or poor, in jail or out." Down intc his darkness her clean soul had reached and had seen the spark of him huddling there. Her sweet breath had blown that spark into a flame that mounting higher and higher in the man had purified every channel of his being. It was because of her he stood warmly honored before the world, and so to her alone he spoke, disregarding the rapacious newspapers and the well-earned right of his public who had paid high prices for seats.

His thoughts went back to the open roads that had brought him health. Whereas his world had once been bounded by parquets and the smart folk seated there, whereas he had once worshiped money and power and coveted fame he was now a submissive disciple of the great silent forces of nature that had called to him from stream and field. Between his eyes

and Toy's lay a river bubbling at sunset . . . . fragrant meadowlands . . . . full tasseled corn . . . . twilight . . . . night . . . . a blue-white star . . . . a crescent moon . . . . lights in a farm house.

When Sir Hubert Romeyne spoke he made no explanation . . . . no speech . . . . he gave no account of his mysterious absent years. He simply made acknowledgment to Toy of his gratitude and love. With the mastery of his marvelous voice he took her back to summer nights when they had wandered hand in hand over the purpling hills. Not one other living soul in the audience understood his message and he did not mean they should. After he had spoken it she knew he was hers for all time.

He simply said:

"A star hung low over
An amethyst hill;
A bird awake on a
Hazel bough;
A tattered reed at the
Edge of a pool;
A bud breathing upward
From silver-green moss;

A breeze echoing from a
Deep cavern's throat;
A long wave washing
A sandy waste;
One woman looking across
The night to me. . . . .

This is the world!"

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to be taken from the Building

form 410